

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

HISTORY A

OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in History A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y221/01 Summer 2025 series

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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. A selection of candidate responses is also provided. 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 and the mark scheme can be downloaded from [Teach Cambridge](#).

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Paper Y221 series overview

Y221 is one of twenty-four units in Paper 1 for the A Level examination for GCE History. This unit tests a coherent period of non-British History through a short answer essay question and a traditional essay question. The paper contains two questions, each having two parts, a short answer essay and a traditional essay. Candidates have to answer both parts of one question.

To do well on the short answer essay question, candidates need to consider the significance or importance of 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. To reach the higher levels candidates need to assess the issues they discuss and reach a supported judgement, at least in the conclusion.

On this paper the overwhelming majority of candidates opted for Question 2.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
- gave equal consideration to the two issues in the short answer essay - reached a developed and supported judgement as to which issue was more significant or important - linked their knowledge of the issues to the focus of the question - in answering the essay question candidates discussed at least two issues in depth - comparatively evaluated their chosen factors in the essays - gave supporting detail which 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.	- considered only one of the issues or discussed one in a superficial way - produced a judgement that was not supported and was therefore assertion or a judgement that did not follow logically from the response - were unable to use their knowledge to address the issue in the question - showed a poor understanding of the major issues relevant to the essay - were unable to support their answer with relevant or accurate material - did not focus on the precise wording of the question - made unsupported comments about issues which were no more than assertions.

OCR support



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Question 1 (a) (i) and (ii)

1

(a) Which of the following was more successful in Nazi Germany during the period from 1933 to 1939?

(i) Gleichschaltung

(ii) Autarky

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

[10]

This was the less popular of the two questions but elicited a wide range of responses. Understanding of both terms was variable. Gleichschaltung was more well-known with the best responses taking a wide understanding of the term and producing analytical considerations which looked at a wide range of features including policies towards religion, women and the youth. The best responses also adopted a wider context including control of opposition and the development of a one party state. Autarky was less well-known. A number of candidates were uncertain of the meaning of autarky and wrote generally on the authoritarian nature of Nazi rule, while better responses were able to look at the drive for self-sufficiency and the development of ersatz products, tying this into preparations for war.

Misconception



For some candidates, autarky was seen as a measure of authoritarian control by the Nazis rather than a drive for self-sufficiency.

Exemplar 1

I	a	
		1 - removal of regional parliament - trade unions - political parties - local Nazis
		2 - Guns vs. Butter - outbreed - 1/8 of foreign national - Corring
		Gleichschaltung was successful in being able to thoroughly coordinate the Nazi State to one become a dictatorship. Hitler's dictatorship could only be established with thorough coordination of the dissent elements of Weimar into the Comprehensive Control of the Nazis which Hitler managed to do successfully. Trade unions a key supporter of the working class which had provided a huge power amount of opposition were purged and replaced with the German Labor Front. This shows how Gleichschaltung was successful in removing the opposition provided by key sources of power allowing Hitler to fully consolidate his power. Success

in Gleichschaltung is encapsulated by comprehensive control of all parts of German Society which is further stressed by the creation of a one party state. The banning of the KPD after the Reichstag fire along with the banning of the SPD and all parties allowed Hitler to further remove another source that could provide opposition to the Nazis allowing him to go unchecked in his policies. Finally, we can see how the removal of regional parliaments and their replacement with Nazi leaders shows how Gleichschaltung was able to impact all parts of the country which showed Gleichschaltung to be a success in its policies. Overall, the far reaching and far spread impact Gleichschaltung was able to have stresses how it was successful in bringing Germany together as one united force run by the Nazis.

Autarky can also be seen as successful in how it was able to prepare the Nazi Economy for war. The Guns vs butter debate stressed

the need for an increase in
 armaments production to satisfy
 Germany's increasingly expansionist
 foreign policy. Göring's four
 year plan to achieve this
 was to increase control over imports
 and exports to focus on armaments
 along with increased and harsher
 work quotas. These were
 successful in gaining more production
 with them needing their quotas
 in items such as oil and rubber.
 The initial expansions were successful
 as well such as the annexation of
 Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland. However,
 the fact that by 1939 Germany
 was still relying on foreign
 imports for over $\frac{1}{3}$ of
 raw materials stresses that
 the policy of Autarky was
 not successful in meeting the
 need and required to be
 self sufficient.

Overall we can see how Gleichsetzung
 was the more successful policy given
 how it was able to gain
 comprehensive control. Gleichsetzung was able

		t impact all postg Nazi organisations
		whereas Aitahy was not as
		successful in being on fully self
		sufficient. This broadness of scope
		Gleadow was able to achieve costs
		is it was more successful than the
		issues with Aitahy by the end of
		1939.

This Level 6 exemplar demonstrates a response which gives a thorough evaluation of both factors before arriving at a substantiated judgement.

Question 1 (b)*

(b)* 'The building of the Berlin Wall was the most significant development in the division of Germany during the period from the end of the Berlin Blockade in May 1949 to 1963.'

How far do you agree?

[20]

This question also elicited a wide range of responses, with less successful responses uncertain of developments that led to the division of Germany. Some candidates included material from pre-May 1949 and therefore outside the scope of the question. A number produced narrative accounts of the Berlin Blockade and were confined to the lower reaches of the mark-scheme. Better responses examined the impact of the construction of the Berlin Wall, focusing on the division to families and communities and the tensions created between the East and West. The best responses noted how the Wall stabilised East German society by protecting its workforce. In contrast many candidates examined the growth of West Germany and its acceptance internationally as more significant in terms of the division of Germany. Notable inclusions were the creation of a German army in 1955, its engagement in the Korean War, the creation of the Basic Law and the adoption of the Hallstein Doctrine as being ultimately more significant in the division of Germany. Other candidates looked at events in the East, including the 1953 uprising and the use of Soviet troops as equally significant.

Misconception



Some candidates believed the Berlin Wall was constructed at the end of the Berlin Blockade.

Question 2 (a) (i) and (ii)

2

(a) Which of the following was the more important cause of tensions over Germany during the period from 1945 to 1949?

(i) Bizonia

(ii) The Berlin Blockade

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

[10]

This was the more popular of the two questions and most candidates were able to produce a balanced analysis and evaluation of both features. Bizonia was misread by some who saw it as the unification of the French and British zones, whereas others wrote very generally about Bizonia and tensions and were restricted to Level 2. Better responses were able to define Bizonia fully and demonstrate how it led to improved communications and eventually the formation of Trizonia. Most candidates wrote more confidently on the Berlin Blockade, although some confused this with the Berlin Wall crisis and wrote about tank conflicts at Checkpoint Charlie. Better responses were able to focus on the tensions caused by the Blockade, including the potential for war.

Question 2 (b)*

(b)* 'Communist revolts were the greatest challenge facing the German government during the period from 1919 to 1923.'

How far do you agree?

[20]

This was generally well-answered by many candidates who were able to write fairly confidently on a number of issues. Most candidates were aware of the Spartacist revolt, but strong responses also considered a number of communist revolts from across the period in question including Red Bavaria and German October. In contrast most candidates were able to discuss the challenges posed by right wing extremists, including the role of the Freikorps, the Kapp Putsch and the Munich Putsch. A few candidates saw the Kapp Putsch as being a Communist revolt, however. Details of these revolts varied, although the best answers were able to substantiate their arguments with specific detail. Alternative arguments included the threats posed by the Treaty of Versailles, the invasion of the Ruhr and subsequent hyperinflation crisis as well as constitutional weaknesses. The best answers were able to comparatively evaluate the importance of these challenges to arrive at a substantiated judgement.

Exemplar 2

82	b	I disagree with the statement to a ^{for} low extent, as the communist revolts can be seen to be limited as the greatest challenge facing German government during the period 1919 to 1923. Rather right-wing uprisings can be seen to be a greater challenge to Weimar due to the large volume and increase in violence during this period. However the greatest problem facing Weimar during this period was its structure and result of the treaty of Versailles. Firstly, communist uprisings can be seen to be limited as opposition to Weimar due to have only being a singular revolt by the Spartacists in 1919, which despite its scale of 100,000 workers was easily put down by ex-branded soldiers the Freikorps. This showed how the revolt in itself was weak and therefore posed little challenge to the Weimar constitution. Furthermore, the consequence of this uprising caused for the communists to be banned from campaigning for the following elections causing their number of seats to decrease largely, reducing their influence in the Reichstag. Hence we can see how the opposition seen by the communists was limited and therefore I disagree with the statement that the communist threat was the greatest challenge in Weimar during the period 1919 to 1923. Rather, right-wing opposition can be seen to have a larger challenge to Weimar in the period 1919 to 1923 by the large scale of opposition and the increase in violence shown by these revolts. 1920 saw the first right-wing revolt by Kappgang
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Kapp whereby 10,000 ex military personnel stormed Berlin buildings and factories and other places of business in an attempt to place their own government in charge. We can see how this was a greater threat by quashing this revolt required passive resistance due to the army being unable to stop the old soldiers through loyalty and the fact that Weimar was perceived as weak enough to replace its constitution with a right wing government. Hence we can see how right wing opposition was a greater challenge. This is further seen again by the Munich Putsch in 1923 whereby violence was seen to increase by military firing and police fire was used to squash the revolt resulting in 6 Nazi members dying and Hitler being arrested. This showed a greater threat as the level of harm required to prevent the revolution can be seen to increase drastically. Hence we can see how right wing opposition to Weimar could be seen as a greater threat to Weimar than the communist one. Hence I disagree with the statement to a great extent.

However, overall I would argue the greatest challenge facing the German government in the period 1919 to 1923 is the introduction of democracy and the Treaty of Versailles. As we can see Germany had no previous democratic history we can see how the Weimar constitution faced challenge by its own structure. Proportional representation can be seen to allow for large amounts of small parties resulting in no overall majority. Hence Germany can be seen to have a coalition government by the SPD and other centrist parties. However this made it unstable. Similarly Article 48 could allow for dictatorship like rule as seen in 1932 by the radical government in the Great Depression. As such Germany's government structure can be seen to be unstable and therefore its own greatest challenge in the period. Alongside the resentment caused by Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles, which determined Germany as the cause of WW1 indemnity national pride and being cause to the November criminals and stab in the back stigma's of Weimar. Hence we can see how Weimar faced challenge.

		by its own authority in the period 1919 to 1923 due to the treaty of Versailles and its structure of democracy. Hence I disagree with the statement to a far extent.
		In conclusion, we can see how Communist revolutions by the Spartacists can be seen to be limited and weak in itself by the simplicity of its squashing and as such posed a little threat to the German government during the period 1919 - 1923. where as, the greatest challenge can be seen by the introduction of government despite the treaty of Versailles causing resentment of the people by the Article 231 was guilt. Furthermore, the communist revolt can be seen as limited compared to right wing revolts due to their increase in violence and level of threat due to the support. Hence we can see how Communist revolts were not the greatest challenge to German Government during this time period. As such I disagree with the statement to a far extent due to the greatest challenge being seen as the smoke and introduction of Democracy as a result of the Treaty of Versailles during the period 1919 to 1923.

In Exemplar 2, the quality of judgement and substantiated argument meant that this response was placed at the lower end of Level 6.

Assessment for learning



To reach Level 6 candidates must comparatively analyse their chosen factors and arrive at a series of interim as well as a final judgement of the importance of their chosen factor in relation to the question.

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