



A-level **History**

7042/2K

Report on the Examination

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General

The majority of students sitting this examination were generally well prepared and had clearly revised their material thoroughly. Time was well managed, with very few students not attempting to answer all of the questions required by the rubric. It was also interesting to see that students decided to tackle the questions in the order which they felt most confident, for example answering the essays first. This approach is perfectly acceptable, students just need to remember to label their answers clearly and it is very helpful for the examiner if they can leave sufficient space between their answers for comments to be added. A minority had poor written communication skills, including grammar and legibility, which does make assessing extended answers more difficult, as does extensive use of asterisks and not crossing out rough working. A significant number of students had clearly engaged with wider academic reading on the topics, which was sometimes well used in their answers, though historians should not be used in lieu of factual historical information, and the use of historiography is not required for the highest marks, it is the student's own analysis and evaluation which is being tested.

Question 01

With this question, students were required to evaluate the value of three separate sources in relation to an issue –the escalation of the Second World War in 1941. They were not asked to compare the given sources and those who did wasted valuable time, although they were not penalised for so doing. The answer did not require an introduction or an overall conclusion, but some concluding judgement on each source in relation to the question posed was helpful to meet the criteria for the highest marks. The best answers were a nuanced evaluation of both provenance and content of the sources. Formulaic, rote-learned approaches were often less effective. A significant number of students were able to identify features about provenance (eg that Source A was said by Molotov who was involved in the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact) but then were not able to evaluate this beyond a simple comment that 'they were there at the time and so this source is accurate'. This approach often leads to much speculation around provenance (for example assuming that Kleist was anti communist) which is not then borne out by the content of the source.

The best answers were able to combine the two. A good example of this might be an answer to Source B which argued that the context of Tojo writing the diary in prison as a justification of his actions at the time of the strike on Pearl Harbour. This possible limitation is then borne out within the content of the source which is rather vague and even says 'Japan lost all hope...'. Here, the student has suggested a limitation, but then was able to back it up by connecting provenance comments to the content of the source. This is a very effective technique which leads to high marks. Simply identifying provenance and making a vague assertion about tone does not lead to higher marks. The sources were mostly understood, but a surprising number of students thought that the British Journalist wrote Source C, which did affect how convincing their analysis was. Some students knew some interesting contextual details about the sources, especially Molotov and Tojo, and were able to deploy this knowledge to produce very effective analyses. It was disappointing to see a persistent minority making very few references to 'value' at all and conflating this with validity, utility, reliability and accuracy, which are not the same thing. Unfortunately, some students seemed to forget the question they were being asked to answer and started debating whether 1941 was when the USA got involved in the war, writing at length on issues such as Lend-Lease but this was not the question being asked. Similarly, for Source A there were some students who made extensive comments on Stalin's Five Year Plans as a prelude to war and again this was not required for this question. It is vital that regular links to the wording of the specific question are made in order to maintain focus and support any evaluations with contextual knowledge.

There were still a number of students paraphrasing the sources and offering very little if any contextual information to support the points they were trying to make.

Question 2

This question, on the increase in international tension, was the most popular on the paper and the most successful in achieving the highest levels. A feature of the good answers was a secure knowledge of the Naval laws, Wilhelm's foreign policy, and the Imperial superiority of Britain. There was an impressive awareness of the actions of Russia and France as balance. Weaker answers were able to show an awareness of the issues but lacked the precision of detail to explain the impact as well as some very one-sided answers that disregarded Britain at all as a cause for the rise in tensions. The Fashoda incident was downplayed too swiftly by a number of students leading to unbalanced answers where this was their only fact supporting Britain as responsible. A key to unlocking this explanation was the recognition of the phrase 'responsible', which led to an examination of cause and consequence. There was some very good knowledge of the Naval race and alliance systems that were put in place in and around this period although some answers drifted way beyond the time parameters and therefore couldn't be credited.

Question 3

The topic 'Crises in the Balkans' was the least popular essay option. There were different ways to successfully address this question, but there were too many answers that were unbalanced and simply dismissed any notion that the Great Powers dealt effectively with any of the issues presented in the time frame. The vast majority of students were aware of, and could support with some detail, the first and second Balkan wars but there was a number of answers that failed to go beyond this which led to a lack of range across the time period. More successful answers demonstrated knowledge of Russia's stance in the Bosnian Crisis of 1908 and took an overview approach that the Great Powers managed to contain the Crises in the Balkans in 1913. There was less knowledge about the decline of Turkey, or Austria's actions in the Treaty of London (1913), although these were features of very strong answers which convincingly explained why the Great Powers failed to deal with the issue of rising nationalism in the region. Any answer which gave a good balanced assessment of the impact of Treaty of London was credited as such and some answers developed a nuanced approach whereby they explained how some of the Great Powers did one thing whilst other Great Powers undermined them.

Question 4

The focus of this question on the view that the League of Nations was weakened by the absence of the USA presented a number of challenges. The weaker responses were characterised by a lack of specific context within the date period specified, or by the failure to balance the answer by using counterfactual history to support their points. A number of answers started with long narratives of the Paris Peace Settlement and Wilson's 14 points or strayed at length past 1923 including events such as Manchuria (1931). However, there were a number of good answers. The most analytical were able to distinguish between the effects of the absence of the USA and the decision making of those who were in the League such as Britain and France. Stronger answers were able to balance their responses with good knowledge of the absence of Germany and Russia from the league in this period. What was required was a balanced assessment and many students used some of the successes the league had (such as the Åland Islands) to suggest that the League was not weakened in this period due to the absence of the USA and these

answers were duly credited. The students were secure on the issues such as Poland, the Washington Conference and the Ruhr but less so on the Corfu incident. There was quite good knowledge of the league being seen as a “Winners’ Club” and a “Lame Duck” but any reference to events outside the given years could only be credited only as far as they were used to enhance the argument offered about 1919-1923 which were few and far between.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.