



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced  
Level in History (WHI03)

Paper 3: Thematic Study with Source  
Evaluation

Option 1C: Germany: United, Divided  
and Reunited, 1870–1990

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There was a good-sized entry for this series for WHI03 1C. Most candidates were able to finish the paper, and the knowledge applied was generally focused on the demands of the questions. WHI03 1C is divided into two sections. Section A comprises a compulsory source-based question and assesses source analysis and evaluation skills (AO2). Section B consists of two essay questions of which the student is expected to answer one of them. The essay questions will assess the knowledge and understanding of the period in breadth (AO1). Questions, in section B, will be set so that they connect two or more of the key topics in the specification and will target a range of concepts which might include cause, consequence, significance, similarity/difference and change/continuity.

The time available for the paper enabled candidates to plan their work and many took advantage of this as evidenced by the plans included. This helped to keep the candidates focused more clearly on the task in hand. Most plans were of a reasonable length and detail so as to outline the overall argument but occasionally they became so lengthy that they constricted the time available to actually write the response. Whilst it would be advisable for candidates to spend a short while getting their thoughts in order before writing their answers this should not be too long. This would be relevant to both sections of the paper.

In general, it was section A that seemed to present the greater challenge to the candidates as they had to consider two primary sources and their use to the historian in investigating an historical issue. There was some evidence that greater familiarity with this type of question was resulting in less very weak, generalised and ill focused answers. Candidates appear to be generally well prepared; however, some difficulties were still encountered in moving beyond surface comprehension of the sources and evaluation which was little more than either stereotypical judgements or, at best, questionable assumptions drawn from the sources. This was particularly the case when dealing with the provenance of the sources where unsupported references to the bias in a source continue but with little reward. It is pleasing to see that comments made in previous Examiner Reports regarding AO2 skills are being taken into account and candidates are becoming more able to draw inferences from the sources and interrogate the evidence with support from relevant contextual knowledge. The question requires candidates to use the sources 'together' and it is good to see that many candidates are aware of this requirement. It can be achieved using a variety of different approaches. However, there are still some candidates who deal with the sources separately making it much more difficult to access the highest levels.

In section B centres do need to be aware that questions can address the same time periods from the specification and that there is no requirement to always cover all key topics in an individual paper. Section B responses generally scored higher marks as there was much greater development and engagement with the stated issues in the questions and better awareness of the conceptual focus. Many responses showed very good knowledge of the periods studied and were able to develop arguments which crossed and linked the key topics being considered.

However, there were still some answers which only dealt with one of the time periods being asked about, making it difficult for these to score highly. Although some essays remained predominantly narrative, they were in a minority. The generic mark scheme clearly indicates the four bullet-points which are the focus for awarding marks and centres should note how these descriptors progress through the levels. Candidates do need to be aware of key dates, as identified in the specification, and ensure that they draw their evidence in responses from the appropriate time period.

#### Comments on Individual questions.

##### Question 1.

For question 1 stronger responses showed a clear understanding of both sources, used them together and were able to draw out and support inferences from them which related to political attitudes in the FRG to greater European cooperation. Both sources were full of possibilities to draw inferences and to link these to the utility to the historian in the context of the enquiry, e.g. both imply that the debate over European cooperation created divisions, and both recognise that the FRG needed to avoid isolation. Moreover, the best answers produced thoughtful observations concerning the provenance of the sources to help judge how far the historian could make use of them to consider the enquiry. Good contextual knowledge was deployed to discuss the strengths of the evidence, and some consideration was given to interpreting the material in the context of the values and concerns of the society from which it was derived, e.g. the understanding that Source 1 was prior to the formation of the ECSC whilst Source 2 was in the aftermath of its creation. The very best answers interrogated the evidence and made clear supported judgements which weighed up the strengths or limitations of the material in relation to the enquiry under consideration.

Weaker responses appeared in a number of different forms. There were those where paraphrasing of the sources dominated and very few, if any, inferences relevant to the stated issue were made. In these types of responses contextual knowledge was often limited and, if evident, used to simply expand, confirm or challenge matters of detail in the sources. On occasions the answers drifted away from the focus of political attitudes in the FRG to greater European cooperation which was detrimental to the overall mark. Moreover, many responses focused too much attention on what the sources left out and used this as the basis for their evaluation. Unless candidates can show that omissions are deliberate, this line of argument carries little value. Source material cannot be expected to include everything, so observing that the source doesn't mention a specific point, unless being used for an example of deliberate omission is unlikely to be valid criteria for judgement. Candidates are asked to evaluate what is there rather than what is not. This approach was still evident this year.

Furthermore, in some responses there was considerable knowledge displayed and focused on the specified enquiry but with almost no or exceptionally limited references to the sources. As this question is targeting AO2 (analysis and evaluation of source material) these kinds of responses cannot score highly.

## Question 2

This was the most popular essay question. The question considered how accurate it is to say that the effects of war were the most significant challenge facing Germany in the years 1870-79 and in the years 1918-24. Most recognised that the Second Reich was born out of war but that effects of war were a more significant challenge from 1918-24 focusing on the impact of the Treaty of Versailles in particular. Counter arguments showed secure awareness of alternative challenges such as Bismarckian policies and the tensions they caused as well as economic challenges in the Weimar Republic. Details were secure with the very best answers offering a wide-range in the evidence across both time periods. The best answers were sustained in their argument weighing up points in order to reach overall judgements. Weaker responses tended towards either narrative or generalisation. If analysis was present, the support offered tended to be limited in both range and depth. Weaker responses also found it harder to stick to the time periods posed in the question with many discussions expanding past 1924. These responses struggled to make supported judgements relevant to the question. Occasional responses only engaged with one side of an argument or one time period and so limited severely their ability to score highly.

## Question 3

This question was the least popular and asked candidates to assess how effective Hitler (1933-39) and Honecker (1985-89) were as political leaders, given the extent of the problems they faced. Strong answers successfully discussed Hitler and Honecker's roles maintaining economic stability and combatting opposition, whilst countering these with Hitler's policies having a detrimental impact on women and Germany's increased isolation in the 1930s in comparison to Honecker's reliance on external support and his inability to deal with opposition in 1989. The very best answers were balanced and wide-ranging in the evidence they assembled, focused on weighing up the effectiveness of both political leaders in a sustained argument. Weaker responses tended towards either narrative or generalisation. If analysis was present, the support offered tended to be limited in both range and depth. Weaker responses also found it more difficult to bring in relevant supporting examples from across both periods and this made it harder to make supported judgements related to the question. In some responses knowledge of Honecker's leadership seemed to be lacking and so limited severely their ability to score highly.

