**AS/ A Level History, Unit 2 Germany 1919-1963**

**THE A LEVEL EXAM**

* 1 hour exam
* Three questions from which you select two to answer. Each question is made up of:
* **Part A** = 10 mark comparison question
* **Part B** = 20 mark own knowledge essay
* Worth 15% of the A Level

**THE AS EXAM**

* 1 hour 30 minutes exam
* **Section A** = One 30 mark own knowledge essay from a choice of two
* **Section B** = 20 mark interpretation question (this will come from either Weimar Germany or the period 1939-1949)
* Worth 50% of AS

**Revision Session 1 – Weimar Germany**

**Layton p. 1-58**

**The Formation of the Weimar Republic 1919-1924**

The first section of the Unit 2 course focuses on Weimar Republic between 1919 and 1933. You can expect to get questions on the following topics:

* To what extent did the Weimar Republic overcome the problems it faced in the 1920s?
* “The main threat to the Weimar Republic in the period 1919-23 was the extreme right”. How far do you agree with this statement?
* How effectively did Weimar governments deal with the problems they faced in the 1920s?

**The ‘golden years’ 1924-1929**

**Layton p. 59-83**

* Assess the reasons why Weimar Germany in the 1920s was seen as a culturally rich age.
* To what extent did the Weimar Republic overcome the problems it faced in the 1920s?
* To what extent did Gustav Stresemann’s policies bring stability to the Weimar Republic?
* Assess the view that the years 1924-9 were a period of economic recovery for Weimar Germany.
* “Investment and support from foreign powers was the main reason why the Weimar Republic survived in the 1920s”. How far do you agree?

**Layton p. 84-133**

**The Downfall of the Weimar Republic**

* To what extent do the weaknesses of Weimar democracy explain Hitler’s rise to power in 1933?
* “The Great Depression was the main reason for Hitler’s rise to power by January 1933”. How far do you agree?
* To what extent was Hitler’s leadership the main reason why the Nazis came to power in 1933?
* To what extent were the actions of other political parties and their leaders responsible for the rise to power of Hitler and the Nazi Party?

**“The main threat to the Weimar Republic in the period 1919-23 was the extreme right”. How far do you agree with this statement? (20/30)**

**?**

**Assess the view that the years 1924-9 were a period of economic recovery for Weimar Germany (20/30)**

**To what extent do the weaknesses of Weimar democracy explain Hitler’s rise to power in 1933? (20/30)**

**The Weaknesses of Weimar democracy**

* Throughout the 1920s the Weimar Constitution, by establishing a system of proportional representation, failed to provide stable government: Weimar governments were **weak multi-party coalitions (often made up of 3 or 4 parties)**. This created a climate of political instability because the different parties could not always agree on policy. In March 1930, for example, Hermann Muller’s ‘Grand Coalition’ collapsed because the parties could not agree on financial policy in the wake of the Depression. No subsequent Weimar govt. had majority support in the Reichstag: Brüning’s only 1/3, Papen & Schleicher’s less than 10% each.
* In addition the voting system (whereby voters voted for a party rather than individual candidates) meant that voters did not feel close to politicians. Few Germans really believed in democracy; the **conservative elite** was particularly hostile & the liberal DDP’s support steadily declined, leaving the **SPD as the only major party totally committed to democracy**.
* The system of proportional representation allowed **small, radical parties** like the Nazis to get a foothold in the Reichstag. After 1929 their share of the vote continued to grow so that by July 1932 they were the most popular party in Germany and the largest party in the Reichstag (37% of the vote and 37% of the seats).
* **Fear of an over-powerful parliament** was strong on the right-wing and within liberal circles and therefore the Constitution aimed to create a presidency that could provide leadership ‘above the parties’ and check the power of the Reichstag. Arguably, however, the Constitution ended up granting **too much power to the president**. In particular, **Article 48** enabled the president to suspend civil rights in an emergency and restore law and order by the issue of presidential decrees. In the crisis of 1929-1933 the overuse of Article 48 (5 laws were passed by presidential decree in 1930; 66 in 1932) **marginalised the Reichstag**; Hindenburg as President, and whoever he nominated as Chancellor, wielded the real power.
* **HOWEVER**, it could be argued that Article 48 did **enable the government to function in a crisis** and in 1923 the presidential powers were used to very good effect; in addition, the system of PR possibly hindered the Nazis. The 37% of the vote he gained in July 1932 may have given him a parliamentary majority on the British "first past the post" system, but in Germany it did not & **he only became Chancellor because the conservative elite mistakenly thought they could control him & use him to their advantage against Communism**.

**The Depression**

* Because of the Wall St Crash, industrial production declined by 42%, **unemployment** more than quadrupled, reaching nearly 6 million, wages declined by 1/3, 50,000 businesses went bankrupt 1930-2 & 5 major banks were forced to close in 1931. The **agricultural** depression had started earlier (in 1927) but the Depression made it worse: by 1932 18,000 farmers had gone bankrupt.
* Inability to agree on financial policy in the wake of the Depression led to the **collapse of the Grand Coalition under Hermann Muller** in March 1930. This meant the end of parliamentary government in Germany until after WW2.
* The Weimar government’s response to the Depression under Chancellor Brüning (the ‘Hunger Chancellor’) was to implement **austerity**; this turned people against the Weimar Republic and & contributed to further Nazi & Communist gains at the expense of the democratic parties in the Reichstag election of July 1932.
* W**ithout the Depression Hitler would never have come to power**: the Nazi vote rose from less than 3% (in 1928) to over 37% (July 1932) in only 4 years as a direct result of it & in July 1932 they overtook the SPD to become the most popular party in Germany. But **it did not by itself make the Nazi seizure of power inevitable**: Hindenburg was hostile to Hitler & wanted a more conservative government. Given his hostility to Communism some form of right wing authoritarianism (anti-democracy) was probably inevitable but perhaps conservative & army-dominated rather than Nazi. In addition, in the November 1932 elections the Nazis’ vote had started to fall (33% which Hitler regarded as a catastrophe). **Therefore, ‘backstairs intrigue’ was essential to bringing Hitler into power.**

**The role of ‘backstairs intrigue’**

* By January 1933 it was clear that neither Papen's "Cabinet of Barons" nor Schleicher's attempt to split the Nazi Party (by appointing Gregor Strasser, a Nazi opponent of Hitler’s, as Vice Chancellor) could find a workable solution to Germany's problems.
* **Papen** was bitter at Schleicher for bringing him down as Chancellor & got his revenge by plotting with Hitler against him. Hindenburg was reluctant to appoint Hitler, but Papen persuaded him that Hitler could be ‘tamed’ by right-wing conservatives within the Cabinet.
* Hindenburg was also persuaded by other members of the**elite**. Hjalmar Schacht, Germany's foremost financial expert, & 23 leading industrialists headed by Krupp & Thyssen wrote to Hindenburg urging him to appoint Hitler.
* **Hindenburg** was influenced by the fact that he was himself a landowner (an estate which his family had previously lost through bankruptcy was given back to him as a birthday present in 1927) & was infuriated by both Brüning & Schleicher's plans to redistribute the land of bankrupt landowners.
* **Hindenburg was persuaded that Hitler could be "tamed" & used as a blunt instrument to crush Communism in the interests of the conservative elite**. Continued Communist success in the November 1932 election made this more urgent & despite the Nazis losing votes they still provided the conservatives' only access to mass support.

**You could also address other factors such as the role of Hitler and Nazi ideas in making the party more popular; however, for this question, the focus must be squarely on the specific context of the period 1929-33.**

**AS/A Level History - Democracy and Dictatorship**

**Revision Checklist**

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| **UNIT 2: Germany, 1919-1963** | |
| **Topic 1: Weimar Germany, 1919-1933** | **Tick when revised** |
| Formation of the Weimar Republic – Impact of WW1, Treaty of Versailles, Weimar Constitution |  |
| Challenges to Weimar – Kapp Putsch, Munich Putsch, invasion of the Ruhr, hyperinflation |  |
| ‘Golden Years’- economic recovery, political stability, cultural growth, how stable was the Weimar Republic? |  |
| Foreign Policy – Stresemann, Dawes and Young Plans, relations with the USSR |  |
| The Great Depression – economic impact on Germany, elections and governments 1928-33 |  |
| The rise of Nazism – role of leadership and propaganda, who supported it? |  |
| Nazi rise to power – the ‘backstairs intrigue’, Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor |  |
| **Topic 2: Nazi Germany, 1933-1939** | **Tick when revised** |
| Hitler’s consolidation of power – control of the centre (Reichstag Fire, March Elections, Enabling Act) control beyond the centre (*Gleichschaltung)*, control of the army (Night of the Long Knives) |  |
| Nazi System of Government – Hitler’s leadership, propaganda, religious policy, was Nazi government chaotic? |  |
| System of Terror – SS, SD, Gestapo, Kripo, concentration camps |  |
| Economic Policy – Schact’s New Plan, Goering’s Four Year Plan |  |
| Social Policy – Racial policy, policy towards women, education, youth, workers |  |
| **Topic 3: Impact of War and Defeat, 1939-1949** | **Tick when revised** |
| Wartime economy – Mobilisation, Albert Speer and Total War, impact of bombing |  |
| Racial policy – Ghettos, Madagascar Plan, the Final Solution |  |
| The Home Front – social impact, propaganda and morale, opposition to the regime |  |
| The Division of Germany – Wartime Conferences, Currency reform, Bizonia, political and economic developments |  |
| Berlin Blockade – causes, airlift, creation of GDR and FRG |  |
| **Topic 4: West Germany, 1949-1963** | **Tick when revised** |
| Creation of the FRG – constitution of the West |  |
| Economic Policy – ‘Economic miracle’, political and social stability |  |
| Foreign Policy – relations with France, NATO, relations with the USA, USSR and GDR |  |
| **Topic 5: East Germany, 1949-1963** | **Tick when revised** |
| Creation of the GDR |  |
| Economic and Social Policy – land reform, collectivisation, nationalisation, trade unions, education, youth |  |
| Berlin Crisis – 1958-1961, creation of Berlin Wall |  |