

# GCE



## Revised GCE **History**

# Exemplification

AS Unit 1:  
Option 5 Germany 1919-1945

For first teaching from September 2016  
For first award of AS Level in Summer 2017  
For first award of A Level in Summer 2018



# GCE History AS 1 Option 5 Germany 1919-1945

## Exemplar Response

*Please refer to the History Specimen Assessment Materials, AS 1 Option 5 Q2b on pages 13 and 14, for the extracts referred to in this document.*

[http://www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/microsites/history/revised\\_gce/support/index.asp](http://www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/microsites/history/revised_gce/support/index.asp)

The following response is intended to illustrate one approach as to how a candidate may approach this question. This response was not written by a student or completed under examination conditions. This response is not a 'model' answer and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

### Study Interpretation A and Interpretation B.

Historians have different views about particular issues. Using both interpretations, and your understanding of the historical context, which of these different interpretations of the reasons for the Nazis' rise to power from 1930 to 30 January 1933 do you find more convincing?

Response:

The extracts offer two very different interpretations of the reasons for the Nazis' rise to power from 1930 to 30 January 1933. McDonough in Interpretation A argues that the most important reason for the Nazis' rise to power was the surge in their electoral support between 1930 and 1933. On the other hand, Kershaw in Interpretation B maintains that by January 1933, with the worst consequences of the depression over, Hitler's appointment as Chancellor was primarily due to the intrigue of right-wing politicians who mistakenly thought that they would be able to control the Nazis in government. I will argue that Kershaw's interpretation of the Nazis' rise to power is more convincing than that of McDonough.

There is no doubt that, as McDonough points out, the depression after the Wall Street Crash of October 1929 was the turning point in the Nazis' electoral fortunes. While the NSDAP won only 12 seats in the Reichstag Election of 1928, it achieved a spectacular breakthrough in September 1930, becoming the second largest party in the Reichstag with 107 seats. According to McDonough, the Nazis' electoral success was aided by the party's '*efficient party machine*' and '*effective propaganda*' masterminded by Goebbels, who convinced the German people that Hitler was their only hope. The Nazis' skilful propaganda, such as their promise to revise the Treaty of Versailles, restore German national pride and establish a national community for all, struck a chord with large sections of the German electorate. But it was, above all, the Nazis' promise of economic recovery and political stability which transformed them '*from insignificance to national prominence*' (McDonough). Nazi propaganda effectively exploited the widespread fear of communism among German voters, arguing that only Hitler was willing and able to deal with the threat from radical left-wing parties. McDonough draws particular attention to the Reichstag Election held in September 1930 which, he argues, '*provided Hitler with an ideal opportunity to play on the anxiety of middle class and rural voters*'. The NSDAP's rural programme was successful in winning the votes of many farmers, 18,000 of whom had lost their farms due to the depression. The Nazis also gained support from many industrialists, businessmen and large landowners who feared the rise of the Communists. They also attracted electoral support among the lower middle class, elements of the professional middle class and even a minority of the working class.

While McDonough stresses the importance of the Nazis' increased electoral support due to the depression, there are weaknesses in this interpretation. Although the Nazis became the largest party in the Reichstag in July 1932 with 230 seats, they did not have a majority and Hitler's attempt to become Chancellor in August 1932 failed. Moreover, the NSDAP's share of the vote dropped to 33 per cent in the election in November 1932 and the party lost 34 seats. Thus, the electoral support for the Nazis was actually in decline when Hitler became Chancellor. While McDonough views the depression as a key reason for the rise of the Nazis, they did not assume power at the height of the economic crisis and, as Kershaw rightly points out, the economic situation was improving when Hitler came to power in January 1933. At that time, the NSDAP itself was in serious financial difficulties and, according to Kershaw, was *'facing potential break-up if power were not gained soon'*. While McDonough implies that the NSDAP's success was inevitable, Kershaw argues convincingly that *'there was no inevitability about Hitler's rise to power'*. While McDonough draws attention to Hitler's charisma, Kershaw justifiably plays down the role of the NSDAP's leader, focusing instead on the misjudgements of Germany's elites.

Kershaw underlines the importance of *'political miscalculation by those with regular access to the corridors of power'* in explaining the rise to power of the Nazis. However, there is a weakness in Kershaw's interpretation because President Hindenburg would not have been compelled to ask Hitler to form a government in January 1933 if there had not been a surge in the Nazis' electoral support between 1930 and 1932. Nonetheless I find Kershaw's interpretation more convincing because the political intrigues of von Papen, von Schleicher and Hindenburg played a key role in Hitler's appointment as Chancellor. Right-wing nationalists believed that they could use the Nazis' popular support to channel the political system in a more authoritarian direction and Hitler could be controlled by Hindenburg (President) and von Papen (Vice-Chancellor). Big bankers and industrialists lobbied Hindenburg, including Krupp and Farben. They schemed behind the scenes on behalf of Hitler. Even the military under Blomberg convinced Hindenburg of the importance of listening to Hitler. It was a series of secret meetings between Hitler and von Papen in January 1933 which brought Hitler to power. By 29 January a deal had been agreed for a cabinet which included Hitler as Chancellor and von Papen as Vice-Chancellor. In the end it was a complex series of negotiations which saw Hitler appointed as Chancellor of Germany. He came to power because Hindenburg legally appointed him Chancellor. Right-wing nationalist politicians were confident that they could control the new Chancellor but they made a fateful mistake.

I agree with Kershaw that there was nothing inevitable about Hitler's triumph. While the economic slump after 1929 undermined Weimar democracy and gave the Nazis mass electoral support, the role of right-wing politicians was instrumental in bringing Hitler to power. For these reasons I find Kershaw's interpretation more convincing.



