

GCE



Revised GCE
History

Student Guidance

AS Unit 1: How to assess the utility of a source

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 Unit 1: How to assess the utility of a source

When analysing sources it is important to think about 3 things:

- The utility of the source
- The reliability of the source
- The relevance of the source to the question.

Assessing Utility in AS1 Question 2a

In this question, you will be given a primary source relating to your period of study. It is your task to evaluate the source and make a judgement on how useful it is in answering a specific question. Remember to ask yourself - useful for what? Make sure that throughout your answer you keep your focus on the question to avoid making vague statements.

In this question one approach which can be used to help you structure your answer is the acronym –**CADMATTLOCK**:

C = Content

A= Author

D= Date

M= Motive

A= Audience

T=Type of source (sometimes referred to as MODE)

T=Tone

L= Limitations

OCK= Own Contextual Knowledge

To reach Level 4 you need to ensure that you have covered **each** of the above with some development. You cannot score a mark in Level 4 unless you have included relevant **Contextual Knowledge**. Remember that this is knowledge which relates specifically to the detail in the source. Own knowledge, i.e. content which is not in the source but you may know about the period, should **NOT** be included. One of the most common mistakes made by candidates is that they are so keen to cover date, author etc. that they ignore the content of the source. This should be your starting point; after all, it is the content of the source which is key to any assessment of its utility. Finally, remember that you have to make a supported judgement, i.e. you must show why you have reached your conclusion on how useful this source is in answering the question.

Example:

How useful is this source as evidence for an historian studying the rise of the Nazis in Germany from 1930 until 30 January 1933? You must use contextual knowledge in your answer. [20]

Extract from the memoirs of a young American student, Adam Howard who studied at Bamberg University from 1928 to 1933. The book was published in 1959.

It became very clear to me that no government in Germany could stay in power longer than a few months. I soon worked out why. The Nazis were out on the streets spreading 'their gospel'. They claimed that they could save every German from unemployment, starvation and bankruptcy. All I could hear

was 'Hitler alone is the only person who can save us; Hitler alone is the answer to every problem; Hitler alone will rescue Germany'. I had to find out what this 'special one' had that drew people to him in their thousands. I saw it all for myself at a Nazi rally. He was mesmerising! He promised to end the misery of no job. He promised to restore German pride and for once he gave the German people hope that had been missing since 1919.

Answer:

The **content** of this source is useful in explaining the rise of the Nazis. It suggests that many Germans believed that Hitler was the solution to all their problems, freeing them from 'unemployment, starvation and bankruptcy' which had been brought on by the Great Depression. The source implies that political instability also helped the Nazis' rise to power as it states that 'no government could stay in power longer than a few months'. In fact, Weimar governments did not last very long and between 1930 and 1932 there were 3 elections which led to a large increase in the number of anti-democratic deputies in the Reichstag. By July 1932 the Nazis were the largest party in the Reichstag. The Weimar governments failed to manage the impact of the Depression and as a result they found that people turned away from democracy and towards extremist parties. The student states that 'Hitler alone is only person who can save us' which could explain why the Nazis became the largest party in the Reichstag. The student points out that many people were drawn to Hitler because he 'was mesmerising' at a rally. He promised so much to the German people, including restoring German pride which had been lost at Versailles in 1919, when Germany was forced to surrender land, accept the War Guilt Clause and pay reparations. There is no doubt that these promises help to explain the Nazis' rise to power. They were seen as Germany's only hope.

The **author** makes this source useful because this is the view of a foreign student, an apparently neutral observer who was in Germany during the vital period when Weimar was on the decline and Nazi popularity was growing. The fact that the American student witnessed these events first hand is very useful as it gives us an outsider's view of these momentous political developments. He also provides a useful insight into Nazi rallies and helps to explain why Hitler was so appealing with his numerous promises. The **date** makes this source useful in helping to explain why the Nazis rose to power. The fact that the student was living in Bamberg when the Nazis were out on the streets using propaganda or 'their gospel' to spread their message helps us to understand their appeal. During this period the Nazis managed to increase the number of seats they held in the Reichstag from 107 in September 1930 to 230 by July 1932. Even though the memoirs were not published until 1959, the student was studying at Bamberg University, in Northern Bavaria, a Nazi stronghold at that time, and was an eye-witness who saw clearly how and why Hitler was so appealing. However, the **mode** of this source may reduce its utility and could be seen as a limitation. We have to be aware that the student is recalling these events in published memoirs almost 30 years later. This could mean that the student is looking back with the knowledge of all that happened after the Nazis came to power and this may well have affected his view of the events in question. The **tone** of this source is quite factual and tries to give an insight into the reasons for Hitler's appeal. The fact that the student repeats the words used by the German people, 'Hitler alone', emphasises his power and 'God-like status' in Germany and increases the usefulness of the source as it reinforces the idea that the German people really believed that Hitler was the answer to all their problems. It seemed that he would succeed where the Weimar politicians had failed. The **motive** for writing this source may have been to inform, though, since these are published memoirs, we have to acknowledge that this was designed to sell copies, a fact which could limit the usefulness of this source as there was a clear purpose to make money out of telling this story. The intended **audience** is likely to be those people interested in learning more about the Nazis' rise to power and this therefore makes the source useful as it appears unlikely that it was written to sway public opinion.

As the source is from only one witness, based in a single German town, it can only give a partial insight into the Nazis' rise to power in Germany from 1930 until January 1933 and an historian would need to consult other sources to gain a more comprehensive insight into what had happened during this period. Another significant limitation of this source is that its focus is very much on the actions of the Nazis and, whilst there is a passing reference to the Weimar governments, there is limited information on how their actions contributed to Hitler's rise to power.

In the sample answer you will see key aspects are highlighted in bold. The answer starts off by looking at the content of the source and using it to answer the specific question on the rise to power of the Nazis. The answer above is one approach to this question. Whichever way you choose to answer it, the key to success is to ensure you cover each of the areas in bold.

Be aware that some factors will reduce your mark in this question including:

- If you focus on the key areas only but fail to make use of the content, you will not be able to access the higher mark bands
- Likewise, if you use your **own** knowledge rather than **contextual** knowledge, you will be restricted to the lower mark bands
- If you fail to explain the reasons why the author, date, mode etc. are useful, you will also be restricted to the lower mark bands. For example, candidates sometimes say that the date is useful because it is from the time. This tells the examiner very little. You need to use the date to place the source in context. The same applies to the author. In the source above it is not enough to say that the author is American.
- In each of the key areas, be guided by **PEEL** –Make your **point**, give an **example**, back it up with **evidence** and **link** it to the question.
 - So, for example, in the source above: the **mode** of this source may reduce its utility and could be seen as a limitation. **(POINT)** We have to be aware that the student is recalling these events in published memoirs almost 30 years later. **(EXAMPLE)** This could mean that the student is looking back with the knowledge of all that happened after the Nazis came to power **(EVIDENCE)** and this may well have affected his view in explaining the Nazis' rise to power from 1930 to 1933. **(LINK)**