



Principal Examiner Report for Teachers, 9389 History, November 2015

Paper 9389/12

Document Question

Key Messages

Candidates did well when they:

- Read the four sources with great care, noting with particular attention the key words or phrases.
- For the (a) question, concentrated on comparing the content of the two sources, writing one paragraph on similarities and one on differences.
- For the (b) question, related each source to the given hypothesis and then evaluated the content of at least one source.
- Included contextual knowledge in answering the (b) question, where it provided evidence to help evaluate the sources.

General Comments

Assessment of candidates' answers uses a Levels of Response marking scheme. The (a) question has four levels of response, the (b) question five. To reach the highest level for either (a) or (b) questions requires the ability to make some kind of sustained judgement or reasoned conclusion based on the analysis and evaluation of the sources.

The (a) question requires the study of just two sources, not four. It requires a relatively simple comparison of those sources, identifying surface similarities and differences. For this question, candidates did well when they avoided describing what sources say at some length, and focused on identifying and explaining similarities and differences.

For the (b) question, the vast majority of candidates could identify and explain how each of the sources addresses the hypothesis. The source evaluation was less well done. Source evaluation at AS Level needs to be specific and focused on the content.

As for this particular examination, most candidates coped reasonably well with its specific demands. The most frequent weakness was to answer questions without carefully reading the sources first. In trying to use the hour to write as much as possible, candidates often neglected the careful reading which almost certainly have resulted in higher quality answers. Specific examples will be given in the comments which follow.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A, the European Option: Bismarck, war and unification

Question (a)

The two sources were both from Bismarck and both from the same year, 1867. Candidates were able to identify both similarities and differences. The former included some sympathy towards France – or at least no obvious hostility – and a reluctance to go to war with France. Differences included a belief that no war would come for 10-15 years, by which time it would not be sought by either side, (Source A) and a belief that a Franco-Prussian war would occur 'before long' (Source A), presumably within 10-15 years. Source B was to