

Question 2: The Holocaust

- 2 Read the extract and then answer the question.

I offered a portrayal of the Reserve Police Battalion 101 that was multi-layered. Different groups within the battalion behaved in different ways. The ‘eager killers’ – whose numbers increased over time – sought the opportunity to kill, and celebrated their murderous deeds. The smallest group within the battalion comprised the non-shooters. With the exception of Lieutenant Buchmann, they did not make principled objections against the regime and its murderous policies; they did not reproach their comrades. They took advantage of the policy within the battalion of exempting those who ‘didn’t feel up to it’, and those who said that they were too weak or that they had children.

The rest of the battalion, the largest group, did whatever they were asked to do, without ever taking the risk of confronting authority or appearing weak, but they did not volunteer for or celebrate the killing. Increasingly numb and brutalised, they felt more pity for themselves, because of the ‘unpleasant’ work they had been assigned, than they did for their dehumanised victims. For the most part, they did not think what they were doing was wrong or immoral, because the killing was sanctioned by legitimate authority. Indeed, for the most part they did not try to think at all. As one policeman stated: ‘Truthfully, I must say that at the time we didn’t reflect about it at all. Only years later did any of us become truly conscious of what had happened then.’ Heavy drinking helped: ‘Most of the other men drank so much solely because of the many shootings of Jews, for such a life was quite intolerable when sober.’ That these policemen were ‘willing executioners’ does not mean that they wanted to be genocidal executioners.

In addition to a multi-layered portrayal of the battalion, I offered a multi-causal explanation of motivation. I noted the importance of conformity, peer pressure, and deference to authority, and I should have emphasised more explicitly the legitimising capacities of government. I also emphasised the mutually intensifying effects of war and racism, as the years of anti-Semitic propaganda dovetailed with the polarising effects of war. I argued that nothing helped the Nazis to wage a race war so much as the war itself, as the distinction between racially superior Germans and racially inferior Jews, central to Nazi ideology, could easily merge with the image of a beleaguered Germany surrounded by enemies. Ordinary Germans did not have to be of one mind with Hitler’s demonological view of the Jews to carry out genocide. A combination of situational and ideological factors that concurred about the enemy status and dehumanisation of the victims was sufficient to turn ‘ordinary men’ into ‘willing executioners’. The example of the group of men from Luxembourg in Reserve Police Battalion 101 offers the rare opportunity of comparing people in the same situation but of different cultural backgrounds. While the evidence is suggestive rather than conclusive, I noted that the 14 Luxembourgers seem to have behaved very much like their German colleagues, implying that situational factors were very strong indeed.

What can you learn from this extract about the interpretation and approach of the historian who wrote it? Use the extract and your knowledge of the Holocaust to explain your answer. [40]

Mark scheme

- 2 **What can you learn from this extract about the interpretation and approach of the historian who wrote it? Use the extract and your knowledge of the Holocaust to explain your answer.** [40]

Interpretation/Approach

The main interpretation is that the perpetrators of the Holocaust were, in the main, 'ordinary men', not motivated particularly by ideology, but rather finding themselves in situations brought about by war in which they were able to kill. Showing understanding of the Big Message will involve coverage of both the underlined aspects. Browning studied Police Battalion 101, as did Goldhagen, but this extract directly refutes Goldhagen's conclusions. The extract focuses on the dehumanising effects of war, both on the perpetrators and on how they viewed their victims, in order to explain why the men of this police battalion were willing to carry out orders to commit mass murder.

Glossary: Although this extract has a particular focus on perpetrators, candidates may still use some/all of the following terms: *Intentionalism* – interpretations which assume that Hitler/the Nazis planned to exterminate the Jews from the start. *Structuralism* – interpretations which argue that it was the nature of the Nazi state that produced genocide. There was no coherent plan but the chaotic competition for Hitler's approval between different elements of the leadership produced a situation in which genocide could occur. *Functionalism* is closely related to structuralism. It sees the Holocaust as an unplanned, ad hoc response to wartime developments in Eastern Europe, when Germany conquered areas with large Jewish populations. Candidates may also refer to *synthesis* interpretations, i.e. interpretations which show characteristics of more than one of the above. What counts is how appropriate the use of this kind of terminology is in relation to the extract, and how effectively the extract can be used to support it.

Example candidate response – high

2

The author of this source first chooses to look at Reserve battalion 101 as a way of trying to identify the "everyday German" in not just the Battalion but in the Nazi party as well. The minorities of the ~~group~~ group were the those who did not murder Jews, and those who did do this with pleasure. The author emphasizes that these 2 are the minorities in suggesting that twisted enough and those who "stood up to authority" were not the ~~or~~ usual case within ~~the~~ the Reserve Battalion (which the author also hopes to generalize towards all Nazis & Germans). The majority ~~was~~ were those who did as they were bid. These men who were at odds with the "unpleasantness" of their work and its ~~see~~ apparent legitimacy, did most of the killing. An example offered by the author is the quote by the policeman, which demonstrates the complete lack of empathy that was the result of the Holocaust. ("we didn't reflect about it at all") The last sentences of the second paragraph shows to us the author's opinion on whether we could blame these men for being genocidal murderers: They ~~will~~ ^{were} "milky", yet, as the author goes on to explain, the cause is often ~~dispositional~~ ^{situational}, rather than dispositional.

In the 3rd paragraph, the author gives several reasons as to why these people became the unwilling accomplices of the massacre (e.g. conformity, peer pressure, fear of authority ...). The author also goes on to provide a social ~~background~~ background of the time. The "situation" that had influenced so many members of the battalion included the fact that there is a

Example candidate response – high, continued

war going on, and the philosophies of the ~~the~~ Nazi party. The author agrees that the 2 can be very easily ~~the~~ connected to form an image that ridding Germany of ~~the~~ the Jews (who were the enemies) was contributing to the war. Here the author seems to be suggesting alot of downward pressure ~~ex~~ exerted by the party / government down on the bottom tier, whereas he/she also states that those who might've ~~ex~~ exerted pressure for ~~the~~ the massacres (The "eager killers") were not the largest group. Thus revealing the authors ~~slightly~~ slightly more intentionalist approach ~~that~~ that he/she ~~is~~ uses. The author stresses the fact that these "willing executioners" were influenced heavily by Nazi ideology. Even if, the author admits, it does not equate to "Hitler's demonological view of the Jews." ~~The~~ An interesting use of "carry out" is used here, which again suggests that the orders came from above. It is unlikely for the author to be an extreme intentionalist, like say, Lucy Davidowitz, in the sense that he/she does not explicitly mention ~~the~~ or stress that Hitler had ~~an~~ a dominant ~~the~~ role in the ~~matter~~ matter. (Though anti-Semitic propaganda, Nazi ideology, the government's capacity ~~of~~ of legitimising were indeed mentioned.) The source also does not offer ~~any~~ any dates that would help us distinguish ~~between~~ at what time period did Hitler (or the Nazi party) make the decision of ~~the~~ the massacre, whether in 1929, at the time of Mein Kampf, or as late as the Final Solution in 42. Therefore, ~~an~~ a moderate intentionalist would probably be a good guess.

Example candidate response – high, continued

The author also goes on to mention the Battalion 3 incident at Luxembourg as a way of comparing these men with their German counterparts, which again stresses the fact that "Situational factors were very strong indeed." Since they behaved in a very similar way. The important fact here is that the Reserve Battalion 101 was made up also of volunteers from conquered states as well as Germans, moved from other branches of the German forces. Yet their actions agree with the statement that "Ordinary Germans did not have to be of one mind with Hitler to carry out genocide". The fact that the author repeatedly stresses that the situational reasons were much larger than any individual dispositional reasons (first by stating that the majority ^{were} ~~was~~ not those who killed for fun or didn't kill, and secondly by saying the 14 Luxembourgers acted in accordance to their German colleagues) serves to suggest that the author believed that "ordinary men" were under such influence, because of the situation that was put in by the government. And that in fact, if the government had not been ⁱⁿ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ a war, had not adopted such anti-Semitic ~~but~~ doctrines, then the ordinary people wouldn't have been ~~strongly~~ prompted to commit such atrocities.

Therefore the conclusion should go ~~to~~ as the author believed that many people (such as those of the Reserve Battalion) did not wish to ~~to~~ carry out the heinous act, yet because of the situation that was created by the Nazis, many of them did do so.

Example candidate response – high, continued

anyways as a means of conforming or even to serve a twisted sense of duty. Thus it would be inferred that the author is moderate intentionalist rather than functionalist in viewing the Nazi party as none of the culprit.

Examiner comment – high

Despite the extract focusing on perpetrators, it was very common for candidates answering this question to attempt to twist their answers in order to address the issue of the causation of the Holocaust. The extent to which this deflected the candidate from identifying the main interpretation in the extract was an important factor in determining the mark an answer achieved. This response was not significantly compromised. Its conclusion that the historian was a moderate intentionalist (because the extract talks about the legitimising role of the Nazi government) is not irrational, and, in any case, forms only a minor aspect of the answer.

Unlike many answers, this essay understood the significance of the different groups within Police Battalion 101 identified by the historian. In the main, the men were not genocidal killers by inclination, but were turned into 'willing executioners' by situational factors. This was the historian's overall interpretation, and the answer argues this consistently and with detailed support from the extract. With the exception of the marginal material on the causation of the Holocaust, the answer is focused and relevant throughout. The fact that the answer demonstrates 'complete' understanding is clear to see, and it was therefore awarded a Level 5 mark.

Mark awarded = 34 out of 40

Example candidate response – high

2. ~~The~~ When it is the question about how exactly did the Holocaust happen, historians can be usually divided into two groups: the intentionalists and the structuralists. The historian here, though not very extremely, favors the side of the intentionalists, who believe that the leadership from above — which is Hitler and his Nazis — was an essential driving force that pushed the Holocaust to happen.

~~The historian's~~

~~that~~ It has been many structuralists' argument that there had been a background of general anti-semitism idea erooted in Europe, but the historian here offers an opposite view that most German people who were involved in the actual killing were just following orders. "The largest group", as he writes, "did not volunteer for or celebrate the killing". It is clear that in the view of this historian, ~~the~~ the general society did not have ~~the~~ such a strong hatred towards the Jews as their leader seemed to have. They were doing the killing mostly because they did not want to "take the risk of confronting authority" or ~~appearing~~ to "appear weak". It means they would put themselves in ~~the~~ danger if they ~~if~~ refused to execute the orders from above. ~~Additionally~~ Additionally, some more reasons are given in the third paragraph, as ~~the~~ motivation of common Germans were "conformity, peer pressure" and "deference to authority". When every people in the society was forced to support the genocidal idea, it would be extremely hard for one to rise up and ~~say~~ point out what they were doing was morally wrong. In fact, ordinary Germans seem to ~~to~~ hate the idea of killing the Jews according to this historian, when he gives the example ~~that~~ that the policemen had to drink a lot to get over with ~~their~~ the "many shootings of Jews".

Example candidate response – high, continued

number

Then, since the Holocaust was not driven by the general hatred from the bottom of the entire society, the ideas and ~~de~~ measures from the top became ~~undoubt~~ undoubtably important. That is a point that many intentionalists like Daniel Goldhagen ~~or Ian Kershaw~~ would focus on — the centrality of the Nazi ideology. The historian here, in addition to bringing out that, ~~also~~ combines it with the importance of World War II, claiming that the war and the racism were interdependent on each other. ~~“Nazi”~~ ~~The Nazi~~ First, he points out that the war somehow “proved” their ideas that the Jews were “evil enemies who stabbed Germany in the back”, ~~as~~ as he mentions “the years of anti-Semitic propaganda dovetailed with the polarising effects of war”. Then, he also explains that in a situation when a war was going on, it was even easier to make up the feelings of the difference between Germans and Jews, which were “superior” and “inferior” in Nazi ~~“~~ ideology. The war helped the Nazis to make the Jews figure as an enemy to Germany even more solid, and hence enables them to dehumanize the Jews and make the animosity ~~legitimate~~ legitimate.

So to ~~conclude~~ summarize the arguments offered by this historian: First, there was not a general anti-Semitic feeling strong enough to make most ordinary Germans want to be involved in the genocide, so the main driving force that pushed the whole tragedy to happen came from the Nazis; Second, the Nazis successfully used the situation of the war to legitimize their ~~anti-f~~ anti-Semitic aims and brutal policies. Even though the historian also makes some structuralist point like there were people with different thoughts and goals within the ~~the~~ group, and did not really emphasize Hitler's importance as one man, overall he agrees that the Nazi ideology was the key that led the Holocaust to happen, just as many intentionalists would agree.

Examiner comment – high

This answer attempts to identify an interpretation of the causation of the Holocaust, which is not directly relevant, but moves quickly on to deal with the extract. The second paragraph the candidate shows they can identify and support an essential element of the interpretation. They state the historian's view: that the men were not motivated by anti-Semitism, but were just following orders. The extract is then used to support this: for example, by quoting that their motivation was 'conformity, peer pressure and deference to authority'. The third paragraph pursues the same approach with regards to the importance of the war, and again follows this with relevant support from the extract.

The conclusion is not as well developed as the preceding parts of the answer, thereby illustrating how important it is that the conclusion should be consistent with what has been written before it. The idea that the 'main driving force' for genocide came from the Nazis is not really the central idea of the interpretation (which is predominantly about the nature and motives of the perpetrators), and neither is the point about the Nazis using the situation of the war to legitimise their policies. If anything, these ideas are inferences/sub-messages: they are in the extract, but are not the main focus of the interpretation. In effect, the conclusion raises doubts about whether the candidate has 'complete' understanding.

Mark awarded = 32 out of 40

Example candidate response – middle

2.	<p>The historian "offers a multi-causal explanation of motivation", suggesting that the Holocaust occurred due to the compliance of the German people involved - 'the Reserve Police Battalion 101' - but they did not solely move at their own will as 'killing was sanctioned by legitimate authority.' The historian appears to sympathise with the functionalist school in their interpretation of the Holocaust, albeit a moderate one stance as they do not reject Hitler's involvement.</p>
	<p>The historian does not mention an order given from Hitler to set the project for Endlösung - the final solution - the ultimate order for complete annihilation which rules out any intentionalist swing. The sole reference to Hitler in the text is the reference to 'Hitler's demonological view of the Jews' which is is not exactly concealed by Hitler - (except during the brief period of slowing down in Jewish hostility in 1936 around the Olympics held in Germany which brought the world's attention) - as Hitler stated his vehement dislike for Jews as early on as in the 25-point-program drawn up by Drexler and himself in 1920 in the early days of the NSDAP and in the hate filled rhetoric in January 1939. What is significant in this extract is the lack of discussion of an ultimate order, despite the despite the discussion of the 'intensifying effects of war' and 'racism', the and the blatant exclusion of that shows a slight biased disregard for an intentionalist viewpoint.</p>
	<p>The Although the historian claims that the war was vital to the killing of Jews, it - 'nothing helped the Nazis wage a race war so much as the war itself', the historian does not debate on the order the typical debate on when the order was given or even specifying which war - was it the eastwards takeover or the operation Barbarossa intention are possibilities but it is not clear. The war The war, probably referring to the advances in June 1941 into Russian territory, is not mentioned, showing a large emphasis placed on the individual battalion.</p>

Example candidate response – middle, continued

2.	<p>The historian's view approach can help explain the interpretation given in this extract – the examination of the 'Reserve Police Battalion 101', a relatively obscure auxiliary force as opposed to the more commonly analysed Wehrmacht or the Einsatzgruppen sections – is a very personal was their interpretation. It is more of a psychoanalysis of the workings of human nature in response to the situation as opposed to a bird's eye view overall approach. The assumptions that the members of the battalion had differing emotions – 'numb and brutalised'; being afraid of appearing weak – paints those involved in an almost sympathetic light. The historian puts a large amount of emphasis on the fact the policemen were 'willing executioners' because of their fear to make 'principled objections against the regime and its murderous policies', which conveys that the writer thinks that although a lot of the organisations – even within the battalion itself 'behaved in different ways' – acted on their own will (like the lack of a unified Einsatzgruppen order for genocide/varying messages), there was still pressure from above. Although there are hints at Mommsen's a typically functionalist polyaratic model, this historian does not discuss the the Nazi leaders specifically and any power struggle they have brewing, but rather a general dysfunction and disunity. The reference to the reluctance or not all-unified will to be 'genocidal executioners', especially when tied into mentions of the war, later in the extract, the holds allusions to Berrin's argument that savage violence brought about by the fast rush of war does not equate to planned genocide.</p> <p>The 'Years of anti-Semitic propaganda' and 'racism' and 'conformity' also reveal that the historian has has examined the presence of existing German anti-Semitism stemming from institutionalised hate since was medieval times amplified by distortions of Charles' Darwin's theory theory of evolution. The Goebbels and Streicher's manipulation</p>
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Example candidate response – middle, continued

2.	<p>and and deliberate intention to take advantage of the German people to improve their propaganda effectiveness is hinted to at the mention of propaganda and Nazi ideology and 'dehumanisation', but the specifics are not mentioned. However the correlation between 'racially superior/inferior Germans/Jews' and a 'Germany surrounded by enemies' is a hint at the popular German idea of Nazi idea that the Jews were equated with Communists, the enemy they were fighting in the East. The institutionalised racism in Nazi Germany is not referred to directly, and the historian shifts the blame as 'situational' by including an anecdote: an anecdote involving Luxembourgers. What the historian is trying to imply is that anybody, not only Germans, were involved in the genocide whether they were 'of one mind' with the racial policies. the</p>
	<p>Due to the strong focus on the human behaviour of the battalions, even including anecdotes about coping methods like 'heavy drinking', sources and factors that are usually examined by other historians have been overlooked. One could argue that plans like operation T-4 (euthanasia program, officiated in early 1940) was also due to 'conformity and peer pressure' and that it was the 'first chapter' of the genocide, but the historian does not include this. The historian also overlooks the possibly legitimacy of other battalions, but one could argue the Reserve Police Battalion can be seen as more or less an all-encompassing scope portrait of how the army/Wehrmacht and auxiliary forces behaved, but again this is an assumption of the writer's intentions. There also have been no examination of documents of orders from anywhere in the Nazi directive (e.g. Himmler's SS/Sondergruppen or Heydrich's SD).</p>

Example candidate response – middle, continued

2.	<p>Although the historian says that their explanation is 'multi-causal', the historian does not refer to the possible compliance of the Jews themselves (like the willingness of the Jewish leaders in the General government / eastern territories to provide the Nazis with name lists like Arendt & Hilberg suggest) or the deliberate ignorance of the Allies despite the Riegner telegram in August 1942 when the concentration camps were starting to be put in the full-scale destruction mode as planned in the Wannsee conference of January 1942, and the emigration plans for Jews (Madagascar, US/UK).</p>
	<p>It In conclusion, despite the stated fact the historian has chosen a very limited approach with the sources, this examination of the gross roots of the Nazi regime and machine of murder provides valuable insight we can learn from – 'they did not think what they were doing was wrong or immoral', and the 'importance of conformity and peer pressure'. This detailed analysis of the state of the human mind and why they were inclined to commit such atrocities on their own will reveals that the final solution, although not stated deliberately in an order, would have occurred from the large amounts of indoctrination (propaganda and racism) and the ravaging of war (intensifying effects of war) allowing dehumanisation – showing an initiative not directly from Hitler, leading to a functionalist interpretation.</p>

Examiner comment – middle

The issue in marking this answer was to pick out those parts that dealt with the extract from among the irrelevant and unfocused material. This candidate was significantly deflected into a consideration of how the extract related to the causation of the Holocaust, and since the main interpretation was not about this the answer could not, by definition, demonstrate either ‘complete’ or ‘sound’ understanding. However, by consistently arguing that the extract was functionalist in nature, the answer was able to illustrate some valid aspects of the interpretation, especially relating to the war. This was enough to earn it a good Level 3 mark.

The second paragraph illustrates how the candidate was focused on Holocaust causation, and begins the process of supporting the conclusion that the historian must be a functionalist. In this and the following paragraph there are references from the extract to the war, but not to the nature or motivation of the perpetrators. Only in the fourth paragraph does the answer finally concentrate on the perpetrators, making some points from the extract. They did not draw out the importance of the different groups identified within the Battalion to the historian’s interpretation. The following paragraph then lapsed into writing about context, and lost sight of the perpetrators.

At this point the candidate demonstrates how attempting to evaluate the extract will always be damaging to an answer. The historian is accused of overlooking evidence and of omitting other elements of the Holocaust from their account, none of which has any relevance to what the historian is actually arguing in this interpretation. Candidates will never be in a position to make informed criticisms of historians, and the question does not seek such evaluation.

Nonetheless, the answer concludes by bringing together points which are valid and relevant about why perpetrators were able to commit such crimes, though even here the candidate asserts that the interpretation is functionalist in nature.

Mark awarded = 23 out of 40