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# A-level **GERMAN**

Paper 2 Writing  
Report on the Examination

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## General Comments

The number of students who did not complete the paper in the time allowed or did not attempt the required two questions was very low, indicating that the paper was accessible and that students were, on the whole, appropriately entered. The paper discriminated well between lower- and higher-attaining students, and there were some very impressive responses across the range of texts and films.

There were two sections to the paper. Section A consisted of ten prescribed literary texts and Section B of six films. Students were asked to choose either one question from Section A and one from section B, or two questions from Section A.

Thirty one of the thirty two questions were addressed, the only exception being 05.2 on *Gedichte – Buch der Lieder*. The vast majority of students chose to answer one question from each section, with very few answering two questions from Section A. There were very few rubric infringements; the most serious was answering two questions on the same work. This is not permitted, and this was clearly stated in the Instructions on the front cover sheet of the paper.

In Section A *Der Besuch der alten Dame* and *Der Vorleser* were by far the most popular texts, and in Section B answers on *Goodbye Lenin!* and *Das Leben der Anderen* were prevalent.

Too many students did not accurately complete the boxes to show which question was attempted (for example 06.1, 12.2 etc), and this sometimes made it difficult for examiners to identify answers until well into the essay.

Overall, there were a number of examples of poor handwriting, many of which had to be referred to a senior examiner. Students need to be reminded of the importance of legibility in a written paper.

Students are reminded of the need to read questions carefully to ensure they have understood the thrust of the question. They are also reminded that how they structure and organise their response is entirely up to them: if a question invites them to consider positive and negative aspects and they believe the negative aspects by far outweigh the positive ones (or vice versa), this is a perfectly acceptable response provided they offer justification for their opinions. There is no expectation with a question of this sort that answers will necessarily be balanced across the positive and negative aspects. Questions invariably invite the student to make a judgement about the validity of an opinion, the importance of a theme or character, or similar. There is no expectation that students should always agree with the judgement or that they cannot mention themes or characters they deem to be more important than the one highlighted in the question. While it is important that they do not ignore the question set in favour of one they would have preferred, they can construct a response to the question that addresses the correct focus but then brings in other relevant dimensions or perspectives.

Examiners noted good knowledge of the text or film in many cases, even if it students had difficulty in expressing themselves at times. Many essays were several pages long, but with conciseness, relevance, support from the text or film and personal evaluation, it is possible to access the highest mark bands within the 300 words advised on the front cover of the paper.

## AO3

In terms of AO3 the standard was variable. Those scoring in the lower bands produced too many errors of a basic nature, including incorrect verb forms even in the present tense.

In questions on *Goodbye Lenin!* very few students knew the past participle of *fliehen*.

In all essays across the board the same errors occurred, for example a host of invented words such as *comparieren* and *die Treffung mit Hempf*.

There were examples of anglicised German; *er fragt, was sie sind denken von* and *und das ist was er ist sprechen über*. Such language at this level was surprising to say the least and really needs eliminating.

Quite a number of students appeared unaware of the differences between *Tod* and *tot*, *töten* and *sterben*, *bekommen* and *werden*, *streng* and *stark*, *einige*, *eigene* and *einzig*, *wenn* and *wann*.

The above points meant that it was difficult, at times, to decipher exactly what the student was trying to say and the intended meaning became clouded. Credit could not be given for points which could not be understood.

On the other hand, higher-attaining students were able to write fluently in accurate German, using a wide range of vocabulary and structures and successfully attempting complex structures. *In dem von Schlink geschriebenen Roman, ihm wurde gesagt, dass* and *die Gesellschaft*, and *in der Leute ständig beobachtet wurden* are examples of impressive use of the language at A-level.

#### **AO4**

Similarly, the level of critical and analytical response varied greatly. There was a noticeable tendency in some answers to try to reproduce pre-learned essays based on sample assessment materials or on the more general questions from the previous specification.

High numbers of essays on the texts and films spent too much time giving irrelevant details of the author or director, dates of publication and awards or prizes won. The best introductions were those which outlined the main points of the answer to come and how the title was to be addressed. Conclusions were sometimes merely a repetition of points made in the main body of the essay. No credit was given for repetition.

The most impressive and the highest-scoring answers made lots of points concisely, kept focus on the title and supported points made by detailed reference to the work. Issues were evaluated and personal opinion offered. Arguments did not have to coincide with any predetermined view. Students' assessments and opinions were accepted as long as there were attempts at justification and analysis. The lower-scoring responses often relied on pure narrative at the expense of evaluation and analysis.

#### **Question 3 Friedrich Dürrenmatt: Der Besuch der alten Dame**

This work attracted almost a third of the cohort. Both questions were generally well answered, with students showing good knowledge of the play itself. In 3.1 students recognised the humour provided by Claire's physical appearance, her acquisition of wealth and her entourage. The question asked students to *analyse* humour in the play and better responses included not only examples of visual representations, but also elements of black humour, and commented on the *effect* of such humour.

Question 3.2 was the favoured option here. The least impressive answers tended towards a straightforward narrative with little comment. The most striking answers delved into *why* Claire could be seen as something mechanical and *why* she could be seen as an individual obsessed with revenge. Many students argued that she had good reason to feel as she did and that strong feelings due to past injustice are indeed a natural human response.

### **Question 10 Bernhard Schlink: Der Vorleser**

Question 10.1 was chosen by the majority of students who tackled this option. Again, the most noticeable trend in the lower mark bands was a tendency to narrate. Some students did not address the second half of the question and, therefore, these answers displayed a limited critical and analytical response to the question set. Although the book centres on Michael and Hanna's relationship, higher scoring answers examined aspects of physical love, emotional attachment, family love and associations that did not develop into lasting loving relationships.

Question 10.2 appeared to be chosen by higher-ability students and produced some high-scoring answers. There were some excellent responses, covering themes, content, complexity of character, writing style, human interest and the use of motifs. Such essays showed not only thorough and accurate knowledge of the novel, but also a clarity of thought and a mature approach.

### **Question 11 Good bye, Lenin!: Wolfgang Becker (2003)**

This film was the most popular choice of the entire paper. Both questions attracted very high numbers and all revealed a good knowledge of the film, although some salient points were omitted by students. For example, in 11.1 some students concentrated on Christiane's state of health and how it reflected the state of health of the DDR. In many answers there was no mention of the removal of Lenin's statue or creeping evidence of the growing influence of the west.

Question 11.2 provided more proof of good knowledge of the content of the film. Good answers referred to Alex's dissatisfaction with elements of DDR society and how his actions suggested how he would have liked the DDR to become.

### **Question 12 Das Leben der Anderen: Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck (2006)**

This option was the second most popular choice of the entire paper. Both questions produced high-quality answers in terms of AO4, but in some responses the quality of the language had an obvious effect insofar as it was occasionally difficult to grasp the point the students intended to make. In 12.1 students were well aware of the power wielded by the DDR government and alluded to ministerial corruption, the spread of fear through surveillance and threats, shocking interrogation methods of their own people and the influence of the DDR on careers.

Question 12.2 asked for an assessment of the *relationship* between art and politics and, secondly, how important this was for the success of the film. The best answers addressed the second part as clearly as they did the first. Essays that only addressed the first part tended to tell the story with little comment or analysis. Consequently, these were not able to access the higher bands for AO4.

**Advice to students**

- Read the question carefully. Highlight the key words and ensure you deal with all aspects required by the title.
- Make sure you leave sufficient time to plan and, equally importantly, to check your essay through at the end.
- Don't waste time summarising the text or film: get straight to the point.
- Don't tell the story of what happens. The best essays are those which demonstrate an excellent critical evaluation and analysis of the text.
- Back up your points with concise yet detailed references to the book or film.
- Write the number of the essay you are answering in the space provided.
- Don't quote unless you are sure you can quote accurately.
- Bear in mind that it is not essential to write an introduction, especially one that tells the examiner who wrote the text or directed the film and when/where it was set. It is perfectly acceptable to go straight into your first point.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.