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EXPLAININGHISTORY.ORG — FOR TEACHERS

# AO3 Interpretation Teaching Pack

*Germany — Weimar Republic and Nazi Period — Five Historiographical Debates*

For use with AQA · OCR · WJEC · Eduqas · Period covered: 1918–1945

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## Why Did the Weimar Republic Fail?

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### Historian A: Detlev Peukert

*The Weimar Republic (German 1987; English translation 1991)*

Peukert offers a sophisticated structural analysis. His central argument is that Weimar's collapse cannot be attributed primarily to the malice of its enemies or the political errors of its leaders, but must be understood in terms of the deep structural tensions generated by Germany's compressed and uneven modernisation. He sees Weimar caught between competing demands: the political need to establish democratic legitimacy, the economic pressures of post-war reconstruction and the 1929 Depression, and the social anxieties generated by rapid urbanisation, secularisation, and changing gender roles. These crises were not accidental but the product of a modernisation process that Germany had undergone more rapidly and unevenly than comparable societies. In this reading, the rise of Nazism emerged from genuine social dislocations for which Weimar democratic politics could not provide adequate solutions. Peukert's account resists locating Weimar's failure in any single cause, insisting instead on the structural overdetermination of the Republic's predicament.

[VERIFY before publication]

### Historian B: Richard Evans

*The Coming of the Third Reich (2003)*

Evans offers a more contingency-focused account in the first volume of his *Third Reich* trilogy. While he does not deny structural pressures — the legacy of the First World War, the Depression, the weaknesses of Weimar's constitution — his account places considerable weight on political contingency and the specific decisions of identifiable actors in the final crisis of 1929–33. For Evans, Weimar's failure was not inevitable; the Republic had shown resilience in the mid-1920s, and the Depression, though devastating, did not automatically produce a Nazi outcome. What tipped the balance was the behaviour of conservative elites — Hindenburg, Papen, the Junker landowners — who chose to bring Hitler to power believing they could control him. Evans's narrative is therefore as much a story of elite miscalculation as of mass radicalisation. The collapse of Weimar was a process with agents, not merely a structural inevitability.

[VERIFY before publication]

## "How far do Historians A and B differ in their interpretations of why the Weimar Republic failed?"

*Use both extracts and your own knowledge to explain your answer.*

**Board note:** AQA asks "How far do these two historians differ...?"; OCR may ask which is more convincing; WJEC/Eduqas often frames this as "How valid is Interpretation A compared to Interpretation B?" — check current question stems.

### MARK SCHEME GUIDANCE

#### Level 3

Identifies the contrast: Peukert foregrounds structural forces and modernisation crises; Evans foregrounds political contingency and elite decision-making.

#### Level 4

Analyses with precision: both acknowledge structural and contingent factors, but differ in emphasis and in what they treat as determinative. Own knowledge includes the Depression's electoral impact, role of Hindenburg/Papen, Article 48, and the mid-1920s stabilisation as evidence against inevitable failure.

#### Level 5

Reflects on why the historians differ methodologically (social history vs. political/narrative history), considers whether the positions are incompatible or complementary, and uses historiographical context (Sonderweg debates) to explain the intellectual landscape within which both write.

### KEY COMPARISON POINTS

- Structural inevitability vs. political contingency
- Role of economic crisis vs. elite political decisions
- Whether Nazi success reflects genuine popular support or elite manipulation
- Significance of the Stresemann stabilisation years for arguments about inevitability

### EXPECTED OWN KNOWLEDGE

- Founding crises of Weimar (1918–23): Versailles, hyperinflation, Kapp Putsch, Munich Putsch
- Stresemann era (1924–29) as a period of relative stabilisation
- Impact of the Great Depression from 1929: unemployment, electoral volatility
- Article 48 and erosion of parliamentary government under Brüning, Papen, Schleicher
- Hindenburg's appointment of Hitler (January 1933) as contingent decision
- NSDAP electoral performance 1928–32 and its social base

### COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS TO WATCH FOR

- Treating Weimar's failure as inevitable from 1919 (ignores 1924–29 stabilisation)
- Assuming high unemployment mechanically produced Nazi votes (correlation ≠ causation)

- Conflating "constitutional weakness" with "democratic failure" — many weaknesses were present throughout the 1920s without producing collapse

## PROVENANCE PROMPTS

### Historian A (Peukert)

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1. Peukert was a West German historian writing in the 1980s. How does the context of West German historiography — the ongoing reckoning with the Nazi past — shape the questions he asks?
2. Peukert died in 1990, aged 39, before engaging with newly opened archives. How might new sources have developed or modified his structural thesis?
3. A structural approach that locates Weimar's failure in impersonal forces could be read as reducing individual moral responsibility. Is this a fair criticism of Peukert?
4. Peukert's framework draws on modernisation theory. What assumptions does this theoretical approach embed in his historical analysis?

### Historian B (Evans)

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1. Evans wrote his trilogy partly in response to the Goldhagen controversy. How might the intellectual climate of the 1990s–2000s Holocaust debates have shaped his approach?
  2. Evans is explicitly writing for a general as well as academic audience. Does narrative accessibility involve any compromises to analytical complexity?
  3. Evans emphasises elite miscalculation in 1932–33. Does focusing on what elites *chose* to do imply that a different choice was readily available — and is that historically plausible?
  4. How does Evans's account differ from the older "Hitler as an accident" argument associated with A.J.P. Taylor? Does Evans avoid the pitfalls of pure contingency theory?
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## How Did Hitler Come to Power?

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### Historian A: Ian Kershaw

*Hitler 1889–1936: Hubris (1998)*

Kershaw's biography deploys his influential concept of "working towards the Führer" to explain both the dynamics of the Nazi movement and Hitler's remarkable rise. Kershaw argues that Hitler's rise cannot be adequately explained simply by personal charisma or brilliant propaganda; it also requires understanding how political actors at every level — party functionaries, conservative politicians, industrialists, ordinary voters — made choices that cumulatively enabled his ascent. "Working towards the Führer" captures the way subordinates and supporters anticipated what Hitler wanted and acted accordingly, often without direct instruction. Hitler provided the ideological vision and focal point for loyalty; others provided the mechanisms of his rise. This framework avoids both the "great man" fallacy (Hitler as uniquely self-sufficient agent) and the structuralist extreme (Hitler as merely the product of impersonal forces), and explains the dynamism of the Nazi system without requiring a master plan in Hitler's hands from the outset.

[VERIFY — confirm the application of "working towards the Führer" to the rise to power, not only to the later Nazi regime, accurately reflects Kershaw's argument in *Hubris*]

### Historian B: Peter Fritzsche

*Germans into Nazis (1998)*

Fritzsche's account focuses on the genuinely popular dimensions of Nazi success, arguing that the movement's appeal cannot be reduced to manipulation, propaganda, or elite machination. Fritzsche contends that many Germans *chose* Nazism — not simply out of economic desperation, not because they were deceived, but because the Nazi movement spoke to real experiences of national humiliation, social disruption, and the desire for collective renewal. The First World War and its aftermath produced a generation with a particular nationalist sensibility — intensely focused on national community, hostile to liberal individualism, receptive to calls for sacrifice and regeneration. Fritzsche is careful to distinguish this from arguing that Germans were uniquely susceptible; he is interested in the historically specific formation of political culture and identity in interwar Germany. His account rehabilitates popular agency — Germans were not simply acted upon — while explaining why that agency took the form it did.

[VERIFY before publication]

## "How far do Historians A and B differ in their interpretations of how Hitler came to power?"

Use both extracts and your own knowledge to explain your answer.

**Board note:** Standard AO3 format across all boards. OCR may additionally ask students to consider which interpretation is better supported by the historical evidence.

### MARK SCHEME GUIDANCE

#### Level 3

Identifies that Kershaw emphasises the interaction between Hitler's vision and others' facilitation, while Fritzsche emphasises genuine popular enthusiasm and political culture.

#### Level 4

Analyses specific points of difference and overlap: both reject simple propaganda manipulation; both see popular participation as important; they differ on whether popular support is better understood as ideological enthusiasm (Fritzsche) or channelled through structures of loyalty (Kershaw). Own knowledge includes electoral data, the social composition of the NSDAP vote, SA violence, and conservative enablers.

#### Level 5

Reflects on what these approaches share (both react against both Hitler-centred biography and impersonal structuralism) and what distinguishes them; contextualises within the Sonderweg debate; considers which aspects of the historical evidence each handles better.

### KEY COMPARISON POINTS

- Hitler's agency vs. the agency of supporters and enablers
- Ideological enthusiasm vs. structural/political facilitation
- Social base of Nazism (middle class, Protestant, rural — but not only)
- Role of propaganda vs. genuine belief

### EXPECTED OWN KNOWLEDGE

- NSDAP electoral trajectory 1928–33; composition of the Nazi vote
- SA violence and intimidation
- Goebbels and the propaganda apparatus
- Role of conservative elites (Hindenburg, Papen, industrialists)
- Hitler's oratory and personal image — the Führer myth
- Legal path to power: Article 48, emergency decrees, Enabling Act (March 1933)

### COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS TO WATCH FOR

- Assuming high unemployment explains Nazi success without engaging with *why* voters chose Nazism rather than other anti-democratic alternatives
- Treating Nazi propaganda as simply "brainwashing" — this misses the degree to which propaganda spoke to genuine desires
- Assuming all Nazi voters supported the whole ideological package equally

## PROVENANCE PROMPTS

### Historian A (Kershaw)

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1. Kershaw's "working towards the Führer" concept is borrowed from the words of a Nazi official. What are the strengths and risks of using perpetrators' own language as an analytical category?
2. Kershaw's biography runs to almost 1,000 pages across two volumes. What are the implications of the scale of his research for his conclusions — and for A-level students using this work?
3. Kershaw is explicitly trying to explain how "a highly civilised society" produced the Holocaust. Does this framing shape the questions he asks and the answers he reaches?
4. "Working towards the Führer" has been criticised for distributing agency so widely that it risks obscuring Hitler's own decisive role. Is this a fair criticism?

### Historian B (Fritzsche)

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1. Fritzsche focuses on political culture and collective identity rather than institutions or individuals. What evidence does a cultural-historical approach draw on, and what are its methodological limitations?
  2. Fritzsche argues that many Germans *chose* Nazism. Does this carry a stronger implication of moral responsibility than structural accounts? Is that a reason to accept or question his argument?
  3. His book was published in the same year as Kershaw's first volume and in the context of the Goldhagen debate. How might that intellectual climate have shaped his emphasis on popular agency?
  4. Fritzsche distinguishes between Germans being enthusiastic for Nazism and being *inherently* susceptible to authoritarianism. Is this distinction analytically sustainable, and why does it matter?
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## The Nature of the Nazi State — Intentionalism vs. Structuralism

### Historian A: Hugh Trevor-Roper

*The Last Days of Hitler (1947) and associated essays*

Trevor-Roper represents the earliest and most influential intentionalist position on the Nazi state. His broader argument — developed in essays and lectures over subsequent decades — is that the Third Reich must be understood as the expression of Hitler's will and ideology. For Trevor-Roper, Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and his *Second Book* constitute a genuine ideological programme — the conquest of Lebensraum in the east, the destruction of Bolshevism, the elimination of the Jews — which Hitler pursued with consistency and deliberation from the earliest days of his political career. The Nazi state was, in this reading, a vehicle for executing a Hitlerian agenda. Trevor-Roper's intentionalism does not require Hitler to have planned every detail in advance, but insists that his ideology provided the essential steering mechanism of the regime, standing in sharp contrast to those who see the Third Reich as an institutional chaos in which Hitler was a relatively passive leader floating above competing power centres.

[VERIFY — Trevor-Roper's intentionalism is best captured in his essay "Hitler's War Aims" (1960) and subsequent exchanges with Taylor; check that the characterisation of his broader argument is accurate]

### Historian B: Martin Broszat

*The Hitler State (German 1969; English translation 1981)*

Broszat's structuralist (or "functionalist") account offers a fundamental challenge to the intentionalist model. For Broszat, the Third Reich was not a coherent, hierarchically structured state executing a Führer's plan but a polycratic chaos — a tangle of overlapping, competing, and often contradictory power structures in which Hitler was frequently absent, disengaged, or deliberately ambiguous. "Cumulative radicalisation" — one of Broszat's key concepts — was not the product of a master plan but emerged from the competitive dynamics of rival agencies, the need to generate perpetual activity to sustain the movement's momentum, and the opportunistic exploitation of political circumstances. Even major policies — including the Final Solution — were not centrally planned from the outset but evolved from improvisation, competition between agencies, and the radicalisation of lower-level perpetrators. Broszat does not deny Hitler's importance, but denies him the role of omniscient planner.

[VERIFY — confirm the application to the Holocaust reflects Broszat's "Hitler and the Genesis of the Final Solution" (1977)]

## "How far do Historians A and B differ in their interpretations of the nature of the Nazi state?"

*Use both extracts and your own knowledge to explain your answer.*

**Board note:** Standard AO3 format across all boards. This debate links closely to Debate 4 (the Holocaust) and students should be helped to keep the two questions distinct.

### MARK SCHEME GUIDANCE

#### Level 3

Identifies the intentionalism/structuralism contrast and references both extracts.

#### Level 4

Analyses precisely: Trevor-Roper's Hitler as purposive ideological agent; Broszat's Third Reich as institutional chaos in which outcomes emerge from competition rather than planning. Own knowledge includes overlapping jurisdictions of Nazi agencies, Hitler's working style, and specific policy areas as test cases.

#### Level 5

Reflects on what kinds of evidence support each position; considers post-1980s syntheses (Kershaw's "working towards the Führer" as attempting to transcend the binary); assesses whether the dichotomy is a genuine interpretive divide or a false opposition.

### KEY COMPARISON POINTS

- Hitler as purposive agent vs. ideological figurehead above institutional chaos
- Planned policy vs. "cumulative radicalisation" through institutional competition
- Whether Nazi ideology was a programme or a set of goals permitting multiple paths
- Hitler's actual governing style vs. the Führer myth

### EXPECTED OWN KNOWLEDGE

- The overlapping structure of the Nazi state: party vs. state; SS empire; competing ministries
- Hitler's unusual working style: late hours, distaste for administrative routine
- The Hossbach Memorandum (1937) as evidence of Hitler's war aims
- Jewish policy 1933–41: from discrimination to genocide — was there a continuous plan?
- The Four-Year Plan (Göring) and competing economic authorities as evidence of polycracy

### COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS TO WATCH FOR

- Assuming "structuralism" means Hitler was unimportant (it means the mechanism was different from what intentionalists claim)
- Treating the debate as settled — it remains a live methodological disagreement
- Confusing "polycracy" with "anarchy" — Nazi Germany was effectively totalitarian in its outcomes even if decision-making was chaotic

## PROVENANCE PROMPTS

### Historian A (Trevor-Roper)

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1. Trevor-Roper was a British intelligence officer who investigated Hitler's death on behalf of the Allied authorities. How does this investigative, quasi-forensic role shape his approach to evidence?
2. Trevor-Roper was a fierce critic of A.J.P. Taylor's revisionist account. How might his polemical engagement with Taylor have sharpened his intentionalist position?
3. Trevor-Roper was famously deceived by the forged "Hitler Diaries" in 1983. Does this episode affect how we evaluate his overall historical judgment — or are the two questions separate?
4. Trevor-Roper draws heavily on captured German documents and Hitler's own writings. What does prioritising these sources tell us about his theory of how historical causation works?

### Historian B (Broszat)

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1. Broszat was a West German historian shaped by the imperative to explain Nazism without resorting to the "Hitler alone" escape route that exculpated ordinary Germans. How does this context shape his structuralism?
  2. Broszat's structuralism distributes responsibility across institutions and lower-level perpetrators. What are the moral implications — and is this a reason to accept or reject the historical argument?
  3. Broszat was involved in the Historikerstreit (historians' dispute) of the 1980s. How does this broader debate about the uniqueness of the Holocaust provide context for his earlier scholarly arguments?
  4. What sources would Broszat have prioritised, and what does this tell us about what his approach can and cannot show?
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## The Holocaust — Functionalism vs. Intentionalism (Browning vs. Goldhagen)

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### Historian A: Christopher Browning

*Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland (1992)*

Browning's study of Reserve Police Battalion 101 — middle-aged German men who carried out mass shootings of Jews in occupied Poland — is one of the most important works in Holocaust historiography. His central argument is that these men were not fanatical ideological killers or hardened SS veterans: they were ordinary Hamburg policemen who had not been specially selected or trained for genocide. And yet the majority participated in mass murder. Browning uses this case to argue against any explanation of the Holocaust that depends on a uniquely German or Nazi psychology. His killers were shaped by situational factors: group conformity, the pressure not to let down comrades, careerism, the routinisation of violence, and dehumanising bureaucratic processes that made murder feel like a job. Browning does not deny the role of anti-Semitic ideology, but insists that ideology alone cannot explain behaviour: situational and structural factors were decisive in transforming ordinary men into killers — a finding with implications well beyond Germany.

[VERIFY before publication]

### Historian B: Daniel Jonah Goldhagen

*Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust (1996)*

Goldhagen uses many of the same sources as Browning — including the records of Reserve Police Battalion 101 — and reaches diametrically opposite conclusions. For Goldhagen, the perpetrators were not ordinary men acting under situational pressure: they were ordinary *Germans* acting in accordance with a deeply rooted and specifically German "eliminationist antisemitism" that had been developing over centuries and reached its lethal culmination under the Nazis. Goldhagen argues that the perpetrators did not need to be coerced or manipulated into killing; they killed willingly, often with enthusiasm, because they believed Jews deserved to die. He challenges Browning's situational explanation directly, contending that evidence of perpetrator behaviour — their demeanour, their voluntarism, their participation in gratuitous cruelties beyond what orders required — points to ideological motivation rather than group conformity. Goldhagen's book was a popular sensation; most professional historians found his thesis overstated, but many acknowledged he had forced serious engagement with perpetrator motivation.

[VERIFY — note that scholarly consensus regards Goldhagen's thesis as overstated; this should be reflected in mark scheme guidance without simply dismissing his contribution]

### EXAM-STYLE QUESTION

#### "How far do Historians A and B differ in their interpretations of why ordinary Germans participated in the Holocaust?"

*Use both extracts and your own knowledge to explain your answer.*

**Board note:** This is a high-sensitivity topic requiring careful classroom handling. All boards apply standard AO3 format. Students should be guided to focus on the historical and methodological debate, not to adjudicate the moral question of German guilt.

### MARK SCHEME GUIDANCE

#### Level 3

Identifies the contrast between situational/structural explanation (Browning) and ideological/cultural explanation (Goldhagen) and references both extracts.

#### Level 4

Analyses precisely: both draw on the same empirical case (Battalion 101) but construct different causal narratives. Own knowledge includes the Wannsee Conference, Einsatzgruppen, the camp system, and comparative evidence from other genocides that complicates the "uniquely German" thesis.

#### Level 5

Reflects on methodological issues — how historians read perpetrator intent from behaviour; whether ideological and situational explanations are mutually exclusive; contextualises within the broader shift from studying victims and policy to studying perpetrators. Notes that most historians regard Browning's approach as more methodologically sound while acknowledging Goldhagen's impact.

### KEY COMPARISON POINTS

- Situational factors (conformity, careerism, routinisation) vs. ideological motivation
- Whether German perpetrators' behaviour requires specifically German cultural explanation
- The question of perpetrator volition: coerced vs. willing killers
- Implications for moral responsibility of perpetrators and German society

### EXPECTED OWN KNOWLEDGE

- The Wannsee Conference (January 1942) and administrative coordination
- Einsatzgruppen and mobile killing units on the Eastern Front
- The camp system: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec (Operation Reinhard)
- Browning cites the Battalion 101 commander's offer to exempt unwilling men — few accepted
- Comparative genocide scholarship (Milgram, Zimbardo) deployed by Browning

- Many Holocaust perpetrators were non-German (Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and other auxiliaries)

### COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS TO WATCH FOR

- Assuming Goldhagen's thesis is the scholarly consensus (it is not — it is a minority position most historians have found overstated)
- Treating the debate as primarily about antisemitism's *existence* (all agree antisemitism was present; the debate is about its specific form and causal weight)
- Forgetting that many Holocaust perpetrators were not German

### PROVENANCE PROMPTS

#### Historian A (Browning)

1. Browning draws on post-war testimony taken during West German judicial investigations. What are the obvious limitations of perpetrator testimony, and what does Browning do to test and corroborate it?
2. Browning engages with social psychology (Milgram, Zimbardo) to support his interpretation. What are the strengths and risks of importing findings from psychology into historical explanation?
3. Browning's conclusion — that ordinary people under the right conditions can become mass killers — is in some ways more unsettling than Goldhagen's. Why might a more troubling universal conclusion be harder for readers to accept?
4. Both Browning and Goldhagen draw on the same archive but reach opposite conclusions. What does this tell us about the role of interpretive frameworks in historical analysis?

#### Historian B (Goldhagen)

1. Goldhagen's book was a bestseller and received a prize from the German government. Does popular and political acclaim tell us anything about the reception of his argument — or about which arguments audiences find satisfying?
2. Most professional historians have been critical of Goldhagen's methodology — particularly his selective use of evidence and circular reasoning. How should students weigh popular impact against professional scholarly judgment?
3. Goldhagen's "eliminationist antisemitism" thesis implies a single, monolithic German cultural trajectory. What evidence complicates this?
4. Goldhagen completed this work as his doctoral dissertation. How does the context of academic training and subsequent scholarly debate shape the development and reception of historical arguments?

## The German Economy and Rearmament — Was it a Coherent Programme?

### Historian A: Richard Overy

*War and Economy in the Third Reich (1994)*

Overy challenges the influential thesis that Nazi economic policy was a short-term, crisis-driven exercise in "blitzkrieg economics" — gearing the economy for fast, decisive wars rather than sustained total-war effort. He argues that the evidence of Nazi economic planning, particularly from the mid-1930s, points to a more long-term and genuinely strategic vision: Hitler and the Nazi leadership did intend to build a war economy capable of sustaining prolonged conflict against major powers, and the Four-Year Plan of 1936 represents a serious, if chaotic and inefficient, attempt to achieve this. Overy demonstrates that German rearmament was deeper and more sustained than the "blitzkrieg" thesis allowed, and that the rapid early victories of 1939–41 reflected military effectiveness rather than an economy tuned specifically for short wars. The contradictions and inefficiencies of Nazi economic management should be understood as failures of an ambitious long-term programme rather than evidence that no such programme existed.

[VERIFY before publication]

### Historian B: Adam Tooze

*The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy (2006)*

Tooze's major revisionist study argues that Nazi economic policy must be understood against the backdrop of Germany's perceived fundamental economic inferiority relative to the Anglo-American powers — and particularly the United States. Hitler's strategic objective was not simply to reverse Versailles but to achieve a continental empire capable of competing with America's continental economy; without the resources of Eastern Europe (Ukrainian grain, Caucasian oil, Soviet industrial capacity), Germany could never close the gap. This framework explains both the recklessness of the decision to go to war in 1939 (before the economy was fully ready) and the centrality of the war in the East from 1941. Tooze also argues that the German economy was under severe strain from an early stage, that the much-vaunted "economic miracle" of the 1930s stored up serious structural problems, and that the decision for war in 1939 was partly driven by the knowledge that the economy could not sustain the rearmament programme indefinitely. Nazi economic strategy was coherent in its long-term goals but catastrophically miscalculated in its feasibility.

[VERIFY before publication]

## "How far do Historians A and B differ in their interpretations of Nazi economic policy and rearmament?"

*Use both extracts and your own knowledge to explain your answer.*

**Board note:** This debate appears less frequently as a standalone AO3 question at A-level but is relevant as supporting own knowledge for questions on Hitler's foreign policy and the causes of the Second World War. Check current specification coverage for your board.

### MARK SCHEME GUIDANCE

#### Level 3

Identifies that both Overy and Tooze challenge the blitzkrieg thesis and acknowledge long-term intentions, but differ in their assessment of the coherence and feasibility of Nazi economic planning.

#### Level 4

Analyses precisely: Overy emphasises genuine long-term ambition and deeper rearmament than previously thought; Tooze accepts this but argues the programme was built on fragile foundations and awareness of economic constraints drove the timing of the war. Own knowledge includes the Four-Year Plan, the Schacht vs. Göring period, autarky goals, and the 1939 decision for war.

#### Level 5

Reflects on what separates the two interpretations (whether strategy was rationally calibrated or catastrophically miscalculated) and uses this to reflect on what "coherence" means in historical explanation. Acknowledges that both represent late-phase archival scholarship that has moved beyond earlier debates.

### KEY COMPARISON POINTS

- Long-term war economy vs. blitzkrieg economics (both reject the latter)
- Whether Nazi economic planning was adequate to its goals or structurally doomed
- The role of the 1939 decision for war — forced by economic strain or deliberate timing?
- The continental-empire / American comparison as strategic framework (Tooze)

### EXPECTED OWN KNOWLEDGE

- Schacht and deficit financing 1933–36; the Mefo bills
- The Four-Year Plan (1936) — Göring as economic overlord; autarky goals
- Scale of military spending as % of GDP from 1933
- The "guns vs. butter" debate and consumer goods production
- The decision for war in 1939: economic arguments for early action vs. military readiness
- Operation Barbarossa (1941) and its economic as well as military objectives

### COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS TO WATCH FOR

- Assuming the Nazi "economic miracle" of the 1930s was genuine and sustainable
- Treating the "blitzkrieg economics" thesis as current scholarly consensus (it has been substantially revised)

- Ignoring the labour question — exploitation of foreign and slave labour as central to the war economy from 1942

## PROVENANCE PROMPTS

### Historian A (Overy)

1. Overy's work is partly a direct response to earlier historiography (the "blitzkrieg economics" thesis). How does writing in explicit dialogue with existing scholarship shape the questions a historian asks?
2. Economic history requires statistical analysis and understanding of industrial production. What does this methodological breadth add to historical understanding — and what are its limits?
3. Overy has written prolifically on Second World War economic and military history. Does specialisation increase credibility, or create the risk of over-investment in a particular interpretive framework?
4. Overy's argument that rearmament was deeper and more long-term than supposed could be read as emphasising Hitler's strategic rationality. Does this require careful framing in a classroom context?

### Historian B (Tooze)

1. Tooze's central framework — that Nazi strategy must be understood relative to perceived American economic dominance — is a revisionist claim. What kinds of sources and evidence would support or undermine this comparative framework?
2. *The Wages of Destruction* is over 700 pages and draws on a vast range of German economic archives. What does the scale of archival research signal to other historians — and to students using the book as a secondary source?
3. Tooze argues that the Nazi leadership knew the economy was under strain by 1939. This implies rational awareness that sits in tension with ideological fanaticism. How should historians balance these two aspects of Nazi decision-making?
4. Tooze has subsequently written on global financial history (*Crashed*, 2018). Does a historian's later work and broader intellectual interests affect how you read their earlier specialist scholarship?

## GENERAL NOTES FOR TEACHERS

**On the [VERIFY] flags:** Every extract marked [VERIFY] should be checked against the original text or a reliable secondary source before classroom use. The paraphrased summaries are designed to represent each historian's actual published argument faithfully, but paraphrase always involves interpretive choices. The most important thing to check is that no argument has been overstated or misattributed in the process of simplification.

**On exam board adaptation:** Question stems above use AQA/OCR format as default. WJEC/Eduqas questions typically ask students to compare the "value" or "validity" of interpretations, requiring students to engage more explicitly with provenance and method. OCR may ask for a judgment about which interpretation is better supported. Teachers should adapt the question stem to match their specific board's current mark scheme language.

**On provenance:** The provenance prompts above are intended as thinking tools, not as a checklist. Students should be encouraged to use provenance to contextualise and interrogate an interpretation, not simply to "attack" it. A valid argument from a historian with identifiable ideological commitments is still valid if supported by evidence; an unsupported argument is not validated by the impeccable credentials of its author.