

Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages Tripos 2008
Examiners' Report on Paper Ge 10
German literature, thought, and history, since 1910

The general standard of this year's performance was quite high and there was good evidence that candidates had been well prepared for the exam. While there were few outstanding scripts, the overall competence of the candidates was reflected in the predominance of marks in the top half of the III range. Where lower marks were awarded, the underlying cause appears to be poor exam technique rather than inadequate preparation; but there was some evidence of unevenness of preparation across the range of topics that candidates are required to offer in the exam, and this may help to account for the relatively low number of Firsts. 17 candidates took the exam, and between them they achieved 3 first-class marks and 14 IIIs.

Roughly half the candidates (9) opted to write two of their three answers on history topics. The clear favourites among the history questions were 10(d) – 'No Hitler, no Holocaust': 8 answers – and 11(c) – the question of the GDR as a dictatorship: 4 answers. In general there was strong evidence of good preparation for history topics involving a pleasing range of historiographical sources. It is worth stressing, however, particularly with regard to history questions, that candidates are not rewarded for the sheer quantity of what they write in the exam, but for the quality of the arguments with which they respond to the topic and of the evidence with which they back up those arguments.

In Section A the most popular questions were those on modernist fiction (6) and Kafka (5). The better candidates showed that they could work confidently with a variety of texts, and there was evidence of enterprising reading in the area of the post-1945 novel, which ranged chronologically from Ilse Aichinger's *Die größere Hoffnung* to W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*. Freud was once again a popular option amongst the questions on thought (5).