

The Good Book Guide

WEIMAR AND THE RISE OF NAZI GERMANY 1918-1933. vi + 186pp. Index. GERMANY: THE THIRD REICH 1933-1945. vi + 218pp. Index. Both titles are by Geoff Layton and in the Hodder - Access to History series and third editions published in 2005. Both £9.50 pbk

These are two more titles from the excellent Access to History series for AS/A2 students. Many of us are familiar with the series, developed over the past 20 years by the late Keith Randell. For the third editions there have been a few changes - and, in my view, these are for the better.

The layout is clearer, the book having moved from the A5 size to 6.8 x 9.5 inches. This leaves more space for the text to be broken and for the addition, in the margin, of key terms, dates, tables and key concepts. Shading is also used effectively - for summary diagrams and exam tips, making them easy on the eye and easy to follow. This is by no means a way of dumbing down, although at my school History has to compete with Media Studies and Travel and Tourism, as well as with Communication Studies. The third edition-style changes help the readers in their study tasks. Pleasingly, there are many visual sources that accompany the text, including cartoons, paintings and posters from the time. They are useful for developing source analysis and evaluation, both of which retain optimum importance at A level. Key debates are explained well: for example, Marxist, anti-German Determinist, Structuralist, Intentionalist and Ian Kershaw's interpretations of why Weimar collapsed and why Hitler came to power.

At the end of each section there are past paper questions from all exam boards, in both document and essay style. These are accompanied by useful study guides telling students what is needed and expected in question answers. For example, the question of how the Weimar Republic was able to survive 1923-1929 is covered in the style of AQA, OCR and Edexcel questions,



Hanza town Lübeck's iconic landmark medieval towers survived the traumatic twentieth century accompanied by excellent tips on cross-referencing, what to make reference to and how to structure an answer: this is an area where many students struggle.

Weimar and the Rise of Nazi Germany, previously published as *From Bismarck to Hitler 1870-1933*, covers a wide range of topics; from the collapse of Imperial Germany, through the Weimar constitution, threats to Weimar, hyperinflation, Stresemann and the recovery of Weimar, to the collapse of Weimar 1929-32. It also deals with the early years of the Nazis until the Enabling Act, March 1933.

The Third Reich 1933-1945 also covers much ground, starting with a recap of the Enabling Act, and the move from Chancellor to Führer, then the economy, society and the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the racial state, the political structure and opposition. It finishes with a section on foreign policy up to 1945 and the debate surrounding the Third Reich.

These are two thoroughly useful, well-presented books, they cover much ground and communicate key debates, information and concepts well to students. I highly recommend them for these reasons but also because sections

have been useful with Gifted and Talented year 11s.

Joe Wilkinson.

BRITAIN IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY by Ian Cawood. Routledge - Spotlight History series, 2004. xxii + 474pp. Index. £17.99 pbk

Here is a manual for examination success - in the already successful 'Spotlight' format set by Jocelyn Hunt and S.J. Lee. It is a weighty guide to Britain in the twentieth century, a mentor for AS and A2 students and their teachers. In that role, it tackles the essential topics favoured by examination boards, exploring context, offering wise advice on essays and providing examples of (supposedly) successful responses, board by board. Its topic coverage is conventional, and hence the main political, foreign policy and social issues appear, all taken to the end of the millennium. It speaks to the reader directly, in the second person, and pulls no punches in its advice, setting out its aims in each section and meeting them. Along the way it explains what is expected of 'discuss', 'describe', 'identify', 'compare' and so on, and carefully differentiates board by board. Students need to be sure that the advice for each board remains accurate, however (things change!).

The balance of the text is interesting. Each topic section starts with description, explanation and analysis; but this occupies about a quarter of the section, the remaining three quarters being essay examples and skills analysis. Most students will need more guidance through the historical data if the second part of each section is to be intelligible. Hence the book surfaces as a guide to passing rather than an enjoyable exploration of the past, and, I'm sure, in this role it has its place. Some students will find it difficult; but the marriage of student, teacher and this book will be fertile and rewarding.

Richard Miller.

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