

Exam-style question, Section B

Study Source B (page 28) and Source F (page 31). How useful are Source B and Source F for an enquiry into the recovery of the Weimar Republic between 1923 and 1929?

Explain your answer, using Source B, Source F and your knowledge of the historical context. **8 marks**

Exam tip

A good answer will consider:

- how useful the information in each source is for this particular enquiry
- how the provenance (i.e. the type of source, its origin, author or purpose) of each source affects how useful it is
- how knowledge of history at that time affects a judgement of how useful each source is.

Summary

- As finance minister, Stresemann introduced a new currency, which ended hyperinflation in the Weimar Republic and aided economic recovery in Germany.
- The Dawes Plan and Young Plan reduced the burden of reparations on the Weimar Republic.
- Under Stresemann as foreign minister, the Locarno Pact, membership of the League of Nations and Kellogg-Briand Pact marked the return of Germany as a world power, thus enabling the Weimar Republic to become a more stable state.
- However, not all the problems of the Weimar Republic were solved. In 1929, Stresemann died and, worse still, later that year a new economic crisis took place.

Checkpoint**Strengthen**

- S1** Describe the introduction of the Rentenmark, the Dawes Plan and Young Plan.
- S2** Describe Germany's part in the Locarno Pact, League of Nations and Kellogg-Briand Pact.
- S3** What economic improvements were there in the Weimar Republic from 1924 to 1929?
- S4** Explain why there was improved political stability in the Weimar Republic from 1924 to 1929.

Challenge

- C1** Explain why the Weimar Republic became more stable from 1924 to 1929.
- C2** Explain the reasons for an underlying instability in the Weimar Republic in 1929.
- C3** Write a balanced evaluation of how stable the Weimar Republic was in 1929.

How confident do you feel about your answers to these questions? If you are unsure, look again at pages 27–29 for S1 and S3, pages 29–30 for S2, and page 31 for S4, C1, C2, and C3. If you are still unsure about a question, join together with others and discuss a joint answer. Your teacher can give you hints.

1.4 Changes in society, 1924–29**Learning outcomes**

- Examine the changes in the standard of living for the German people, 1924–29.
- Understand changes for women in the Weimar Republic.
- Understand cultural changes in the Weimar Republic.

Changes in the standard of living

Living standards suffered as a result of the economic problems between 1918 and 1923. However, there were gradual social improvements after 1924. Many of these were funded by the Weimar government.

Unemployment and unemployment insurance

Unemployment was a social problem in the early years of the Weimar Republic. In 1924, over 4% of the total possible workforce was unemployed. However, there were gradual improvements.

Unemployment

1926	2 million
1928	1.3 million

Furthermore, help for the unemployed improved. The Unemployment Insurance Act of 1927 charged 16,400,000 workers 3% of their wages and in return provided an average of 60 marks per week in unemployment and sickness benefits if they fell out of work.

Work and wages

For those in work, wages and working conditions improved. Though the length of the working week shortened (see the table below), real wages (the value of goods that wages bought) rose by 25% from 1925 to 1928.

Average hours in a working week

1925	50 hours
1927	46 hours

Housing

Housing also improved. By 1923, there was a shortage of one million homes in Germany. In 1925, a 15% rent tax was introduced to fund building associations. From 1925 to 1929, private companies built 37,000 new homes, while the new building associations built 64,000 homes. One association alone, GEHAG, built almost 10,000 new houses in Berlin. There was still a housing shortage, but it had eased by 1928.

Other improvements

War veterans were offered help. Under the 1920 Reich Pension Law, pensions were paid throughout the 1920s to 750,000 war veterans, 400,000 war widows and 200,000 parents of dead servicemen.

Education improved and more young people's aspirations were met. The number of students in higher education before the First World War was 70,000. By 1928, this had increased to 110,000.

An improvement in the standard of living?

Improvements in social conditions in the Weimar Republic were fragile. Employment remained insecure and the loss of savings during the inflation of 1923 still caused hardship. Also, not everyone was pleased by the social improvements in 1924–28 (see Interpretation 1).

Interpretation 1

From the History Teachers' Association *Modern History Guide*, published in 2007.

Working people actually improved their situation with better real wages, unemployment insurance and lower working hours. What this did, however, was to alienate other groups such as big business, who resented their loss of power and profit, and the lower middle class, who saw their own position threatened by a system which seemed to favour the working class.