

Candidate evidence

Candidate A

Georg Elser was the first German to make an attempt on Hitler's life. Can he be regarded as a hero of the resistance to National Socialism or was he a simple terrorist?

Very few Germans were prepared to challenge the Hitler regime for to do so was to risk almost certain death. The few who did, people such as Stauffenberg and Sophie Scholl, are rightly seen as exemplary figures.¹ Interestingly, one man who took action against Hitler - indeed, the first to try to assassinate him - was until fairly recently almost completely unknown in Germany. Georg Elser planted a bomb which missed killing the *Führer* by a mere 13 minutes.² Elser was murdered by the Nazis shortly before the end of the war and in the post-war period his name was largely forgotten.³ In a way this is understandable for people who were focussed on rebuilding their lives and did not want to look back on a difficult past. What is less understandable is the fact that he continued to be ignored even as Germany was rediscovering the role played by the likes of Stauffenberg and the "Geschwister Scholl" and paying tribute to them.⁴ Why did Germany take so long and find it so difficult to pay proper homage to a man who might well have completely changed the course of history? Why is it that even today there are some, like Lothar Fritze, who would argue that he is unworthy of being regarded alongside the other heroes of the resistance?⁵

Part of the explanation lies in the fact that Elser does not fit easily into the stereotypical view of what Hitler's opponents represented. Unlike Stauffenberg and many of his group, Elser was not from an elite, aristocratic background. Neither did he oppose National Socialism from a moderate, liberal, democratic standpoint. Elser an ordinary worker, was a man with left-wing views. He had voted for the Communists, the *KPD*, and was a member of the *Rot Front Kämpfer Bund*, the *KPD*'s self-defence organisation set up to combat the violent activities of the *SA*.⁶ Elser opposed the regime from the very beginning as his political views were the opposite of all the Nazis stood for. As an ordinary worker, he felt at first hand what Nazism meant, he had seen how the working class had been reduced to a state of semi-slavery, how their wages and conditions had been attacked and how they were now left defenceless at the hands of the state and the ruling class. Elser understood the reality of the Nazis social and economic outlook, he lived it every day.

Die Löhne [sind] niedriger und die Abzüge höher ... der Stundenlohn eines Schreiners hat im Jahre 1929 eine Reichsmark betragen, heute wird nur noch ein Stundenlohn von 68 Pffening bezahlt.⁷

He had seen how the regime dealt with its opponents, how it had smashed the trades unions, the Socialist Party and the Communist Party, and thrown opponents into concentration camps. He also saw what Nazism meant for Jewish citizens. The Jews, he said, are "bestohlen und gequält, nur weil sie einen andern Glauben haben."⁸

But beyond that, beyond the bread and butter economic issues of wages, beyond the attacks on democracy, Elser also saw that Nazism was leading inexorably to war. To avert that danger in November 1938 he travelled to Munich, to the *Bürgerbräukeller*, where he knew the *Führer* would be holding an annual speech in memory of the Nazis who had died during the Beer Hall Putsch in 1922. Elser believed that this was probably the only place where he could get near enough to Hitler to kill him. Having explored the building, he decided to plant a bomb designed to explode during Hitler's speech that would kill him and any other Nazis leaders present. ⁹Unfortunately, on the night of the speech thick fog covered Munich which

meant that Hitler, who had to be in Berlin next day, could not fly and took the train instead. This is why he left the building earlier than planned and why he escaped almost certain death.

Elser's plan required not only a great deal of technical expertise; it also required a great deal of courage. He knew he was risking all but decided it was worth it to prevent a terrible war with its countless millions of victims.

Yet this act, which is unparalleled in modern European history, has not found universal favour. The most prominent of critics is Lothar Fritze. Fritze chose the 65th anniversary of Elser's attack to publish an article in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* which denounced Elser in strong terms and sought and deny him the right to be regarded as a hero:

Eine konkrete Handlung als vorbildlich herauszustellen heißt, die Regel, der die Handlung gefolgt ist, als zustimmungsfähig und ein ihr gemäßes Handeln als moralisch akzeptabel darzustellen. Welches Lernergebnis wird uns also in Gestalt der Tat von Elser präsentiert? ¹⁰

Fritze criticises Elser for using violence, in particular for the fact that he was prepared to accept that innocent people could be killed as well:

Zunächst wird zu fragen sein, ob man überhaupt einen Tyrannenmord, ob man einen Tyrannenmord unter Inkaufnahme der Tötung Unschuldiger und ob man eine Tötung Hitlers für legitim hält.¹¹

He attacks Elser for not having considered another place for carrying out his attack, one less likely to affect others, and says the injuries and deaths of third parties "hat er billigend in Kauf genommen." ¹²Fritze goes on to say that after planting the bomb, Elser should have remained in the area of the *Bürgerbräukeller* and once it became clear that innocent lives were at risk he should have sounded the alarm and set about clearing the hall.

Jedenfalls hatte Elser, indem er sich nicht wenigstens in der Nähe des Anschlagsortes aufhielt, sich von vornherein jeder Möglichkeit begeben, in den Geschehensablauf für den Fall, daß das Attentat sein Ziel verfehlen würde, noch korrigierend eingreifen zu können. Ein solches Eingreifen, dessen Möglichkeit nicht von vornherein auszuschließen war, wäre freilich mit persönlichen Risiken für den Attentäter verbunden gewesen. So aber mußten das Risiko unbeteiligte Dritte tragen.¹³

Fritze goes on to widen his attack by arguing that his act was devoid of political significance, comparing it to the sort of mindless terrorist acts carried out by the *Baader-Meinhof* gang in the 1970s. Fritze actually rejects the notion that Elser could have had any developed political insight, saying he was a simple, uneducated worker, someone with no education and by definition unable to make a political judgement about the direction Germany was taking. Such a man, therefore, could have no right to make a decision about whether or not to try to kill a tyrant. He writes:

Man führe sich jedoch vor Augen, zu welchen Handlungsweisen uns dieses Vorbild ermuntert. Jeder einzelne, der nach eigenem Gutdünken eine relevant ähnliche Gefahr wie Else ... diagnostiziert, wäre danach selbst ohne genauere Prüfung der Tauglichkeit und Erforderlichkeit des Mittels

berechtigt, die .. einer Problemlösung im Wege stehenden Personen gewaltsam zu beseitigen.¹⁴

Fritze writes scathingly about those he claims worship Elser "allen voran die Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand"¹⁵ and the message they are trying to transmit by their "rundum positiven Herausstellung eines unzulänglich durchdachten und schlecht ausgeführten Anschlags". He denounces Rolf Hochhut, who campaigned hard for due recognition,¹⁶ asking "soll Deutschland wirklich ... mit diesem Attentäter „prahlen“?"¹⁷ Fritze denounces the likes of Hochhut for their alleged "unkritische Elser-Verehrung", adding:

Seit Jahren arbeiten Interessenten an einer „Heiligsprechung“ des Attentäters. Manche fordern gar ein „Bekenntnis zu Elser“; das heißt, wir alle sollen uns an den Maßstäben messen, die durch sein Handeln exemplifiziert wurden. Man führe sich jedoch vor Augen, zu welchen Handlungsweisen uns dieses Vorbild ermuntert.¹⁸

Fritze writes in negative terms of the attempt to raise Elser into what he calls the "Ehrgalerie des deutschen Widerstands gegen den Nationalsozialismus":

Tat und Person werden geschichtspolitisch vereinnahmt und erfreuen sich einer kritiklosen Würdigung ... Elser soll als einer der größten Deutschen und als ein Vorbild, insbesondere für die Jugend, herausgestellt werden. Ihm, dem „kleinen Mann aus dem Volke“, nachzueifern gilt der politischen Klasse als ein angemessenes Lernergebnis aus der nationalsozialistischen Katastrophe.¹⁹

Fritze, then, is scornful of Elser, condemns his violence, his alleged indifference to the loss of innocent life, dismisses his claims to have political insight and rejects the notion that his example should be held as exemplary.

What makes Fritze's case so remarkable is that he ignores the view Elser expressed in his interrogation when he said "Ich wollte doch durch meine Tat ein noch größeres Blutvergiessen verhindern".²⁰ Fritze is determined to highlight the regrettable loss of life Elser caused but he seems to overlook the millions whose lives would have been saved had he succeeded. Moreover, he ignores the fact that Elser took pains to try and ensure he avoided, as far as possible, taking innocent lives. He constructed a timing device of such skill that he could have it explode at a time that would, he envisaged, kill Hitler and other leading Nazis and a time when, as his research the previous year had shown, the hall would be filled mainly with Nazis. Moreover, it is not true to say that Elser was indifferent to the suffering he caused. During his time in the Gestapo's hands he pleaded for a message to be sent to the relatives of the victims expressing his deepest sympathies and saying that he thought about them all the time. But while Elser was troubled by this, he was also realistic enough to say "Ich habe gewusst, es wurde auch anderen als die Oberen treffen, aber es hat sein müssen". He clearly felt that there was a greater good at stake.

As for the lack of political insight, as the interrogation revealed, Elser was able to articulate clearly why he acted as he did; as shown above, he talked about how the position of the workers had deteriorated under the Nazis. But what Fritze dismisses is that Elser saw the danger of Fascism earlier than most. While millions of Germans were right behind Hitler - including many of those who would later be feted as heroes of the opposition²¹ - Elser saw

the dangers and decided to do something about it. While the Stauffenberg group waited until the disaster in Russia showed the regime was finished, Elser decided upon action before the war had even started. "Der Hitler ist schlecht für Deutschland",²² Elser told interrogators and he spoke about what the consequences would be for Germany of Hitler's war, saying 'bald wird eine Feuerwalze über Deutschland rollen und alles vernichten. Dann wird Blut fließen ohne Ende'.²³ Despite what Fritze says, Elser clearly had a highly developed political consciousness though his opposition to fascism was from a left-wing standpoint.

Fritze's allegations would probably be justifiable had Elser acted against a legitimate, democratic government. But under a fascist dictatorship it was impossible to protest peacefully and effectively. The state was all powerful and all normal channels of opposition had been crushed. Elser may stand condemned before a court of morality, but that only shows that morality is not absolute and that what is justifiable and acceptable changes depending on circumstances. After all, even Stauffenberg's bomb took innocent lives and surely even Fritze would admit that the violence necessary finally to rid Europe of Nazism far surpassed that of Elser's bomb. How many innocent lives were lost when the allies invaded Europe or when the Soviet Union crushed Hitler's forces in the East? Yet who would now argue that such violence was immoral. Fortunately, not many share Fritze's absolutist view and Elser has now become recognised and accepted by many as an honourable opponent of National Socialism.²⁴

1597 words without quotes.

¹ "In Stauffenbergs person haben das *andere Deutschland* und der Widerstand gegen die Nazi-Diktatur eine eindrucksvolle Verkörperung gefunden. Der Aufstand des Gewissens ... bleibt Vermächtnis", in *Wolfrum and Westermann*, p. 90.

² The source of the material on Elser's life is *Ich habe den Krieg verhindern wollen: Georg Elser und das Attentat vom 8. November 1939. Eine Dokumentation der Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Baden-Württemberg und der Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand*

³ All the quotes on Elser's views are taken from the transcript of his interrogation with the Gestapo published in *Georg Elser. Verhörprotokoll*, <http://www.georg-elsler-arbeitskreis.de/texts/geverhoerb0.htm>

⁴ In *Deutsche Geschichte im 20. Jahrhundert* Elser's name is not even mentioned while the author makes the following point: "So wie allein die Reichswehr die Machtmittel besessen hätte, Hitlers Herrschaft an ihrem Beginn zu stoppen, so hatte allein der militärische Widerstand eine realistische Chance, die Tyrannei von innen heraus zu beenden." Elser's example is the living refutation of that view.

⁵ Lothar Fritze is typical of those who criticise Elser from a moral-pacifist standpoint and the quotes here are taken from an article he published in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* on 8th November 1999 entitled *Versuch einer moralischen Bewertung des Attentäters Johann Georg Elser*.

⁶ See *Verhörprotokoll*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ The recent feature film *Elser; er hätte die Welt verändert*, by Oliver Hirschbiegel shows this in detail.

¹⁰ See Fritze, 2. Die Bombe im Bürgerbräukeller

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ For details of Hochhuth's campaign for recognition for Elser see *Hochhuth mahnt Denkmal für Hitler-Attentäter Elser an*.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ See *Verhörprotokoll*.

²¹ See *Heiliger uterm Hakenkreuz*.

²² See *Verhörprotokoll*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Elser now has a Denkmal in memory of his deed in Berlin. See below for photos.

1. *Ich habe den Krieg verhindern wollen: Georg Elser und das Attentat vom 8. November 1939. Eine Dokumentation der Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Baden-Württemberg und der Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand* <http://www.georg-elsler-arbeitskreis.de/texts/elsler-dokumentation-2009.pdf>,
2. *Die Bombe im Bürgerbräukeller. Der Anschlag auf Hitler vom 8. November 1939. Versuch einer moralischen Bewertung des Attentäters Johann Georg Elser*, an article by Lothar Fritze, *Frankfurter Rundschau* . 8.11.1999
3. *Georg Elser, Verhörprotokoll*, <http://www.georg-elsler-arbeitskreis.de/texts/geverhoerb0.htm>
4. *Elser; er hätte die Welt verändert*, Materialien für die schulische und außerschulische Bildung. http://www.elsler-derfilm.de/ELSER_Bildungsmaterial.pdf
5. *Die 101 Wichtigsten Personen der Deutschen Geschichte* , by Edgar Wolfrum and Stefan Westermann, Beck, 2015.
6. *Deutsche Geschichte im 20 Jahrhundert*, Andreas Wirsching, Beck 2001.
7. *Heiliger uterm Hakenkreuz: Hitler-Attentäter Graf von Stauffenberg*, <http://www.spiegel.de/einestages/100-jahre-stauffenberg-heiliger-unterm-hakenkreuz-a-948844.htm>
8. *Elser; er hätte die Welt verändert*, a film by Oliver Hirschbiegel.
9. Rolf Hochhuth: *Hochhuth mahnt Denkmal für Hitler-Attentäter Elser an*. in https://www.focus.de/kultur/diverses/geschichte-hochhuth-mahnt-denkmal-fuer-hitler-attentaeter-elsler-an_aid_449901.htm

Candidate B

To what extent do you agree that the themes dealt with in “Hamide spielt Hamide” provide the reader with a realistic insight into the life of Turks in Germany?

In this essay, I will be analysing how realistically the life of Turks living in Germany is in the novel “Hamide spielt Hamide”. I will do this by discussing integration into Germany, the racism in the book compared to the racism experienced by other Turkish immigrants to Germany and the roles of the members of a traditional Turkish family.

“Hamide spielt Hamide” is a novel by Annalies Schwarz about a young teenager named Hamide who moves to Bremen in Germany along with her family from Turkey. The story is set in the 1980s when a significant number of Turkish people had moved to Germany in order to find work and receive a better standard of living. The novel deals with the themes of integration, racism and traditional roles within the Turkish family. The book is revolved around Hamide but is told through the eyes of Hamide’s German teacher, Frau Weißenbach, who is the storyteller and one of the people who thinks fondly of Hamide and sees a bright future and has hopes for her. Frau Weißenbach decides to put on a play about the integration of Turkish people in Germany in the hope of bringing the two cultures together and to bring an end to the prejudice within the school. Through the play, we are also introduced to issues experienced by the Turks such as them getting the blame for stealing from one of the German ladies. There is a large contrast between those who are against the different races and those who want to move forward and create a more accepting society. As the novel progresses, we see how Hamide and other Turkish immigrants settle into German culture and what they go through whilst living there. Hamide and the other Turkish classmates struggle with racism from their German classmates and face challenges whilst integrating into their new lives. Hamide also deals with stress from her very old fashioned father who stops her from pursuing what she wants to do and looks down

on her for being a female as in traditional Islamic culture, women are suppressed which makes it hard for Hamide and her mother to be respected to the extent to which they should be.

Firstly, I will examine the theme of integration which is experienced by the Turkish in Germany. The lack of integration is a large factor which prevents the two cultures from coming closer together which is shown by Schwarz in the novel. Whilst at the German school, there is strong evidence to show that some of the Turkish children struggle fitting in:

“die anderen werden uns auslachen, weil wir nicht so gut Deutsch können”. (p24)

It is made clear that some of the Turkish students are finding it hard to communicate with the rest of the class as they cannot speak German well. This shows how some Turks find it hard to assimilate with the German culture when they are unable to speak the language properly. It is also mentioned that some of the German pupils would laugh at the Turks due to their struggle to speak German properly which proves to show that there is a barrier between the two cultures, preventing the Turks from fully fitting in. The Turkish pupils in the school also find it hard to make friends with the German pupils, so much so that they become desperate to find people who they can become close with:

“Hamide wollte sich Freunde kaufen”. (p13)

We are told that Hamide is trying to buy friends by paying for their food, just so that she has people she can speak with. This shows how it is hard for the Turks to make friends and shows what they have to do in order to be liked. The fact that the Turkish students are struggling to get

along with the German students shows evidence that they find it hard to fully integrate into German culture and society and shows how they are segregated within the school.

Furthermore, we gain an insight into the life of Turkish immigrants to Germany through the traditional family structure which is common in a lot of families. In traditional Turkish/Muslim families, the men are seen as more important than women and the father of the family is in charge of everything. The males are taught about strength and how to be successful whereas the women are just expected to look after the family and do the chores around the house. In "Hamide spielt Hamide" the role of the Turkish family is clearly seen in Hamide's family. The role of the traditional woman is shown whilst Frau Weißenbach goes to visit Hamide's family and only the men are allowed to discuss Hamide's welfare. Hamide's mum is also portrayed as a maid-like figure to the father: "sie bringt Tee". Hamide's mum is not allowed to be involved with the discussion and only enters the room when bringing tea to the guests. Also, in traditional Turkish family life, children must obey their parents and must do whatever they say. Hamide's dad believes that if she takes part in the play, she will not be respected:

"Mein Vater denkt, dass dies meinem Ruf schaden würde und dass ich später keinen Mann bekäme." (p28)

Hamide's dad tells her that she will ruin her reputation by being alongside other Turkish boys and that she will not be able to get a husband as she will be looked down upon. We see that this is very different from the German culture and shows that family life in Turkey is much more difficult for children, especially girls.

Moreover, the theme of racism is also explored in "Hamide spielt Hamide". A group of students in the school, known as the Skinheads are a group of neo-Nazis who are extremely racist towards the Turks and cause a lot of trouble and upset the Turks. The Skinheads write on the bathroom stalls, racist comments:

"Türken raus!" (p68)

The Turkish children are scared of the Skinheads and are intimidated by their behaviour:

"Sie kommen!" (p62)

The Skinheads even refer to the Turks as pigs and suggest that they are swine:

"Türken sind Schweine!" (p61)

However, there is also a flipside to the racism between the Turks and Germans. Throughout the novel we are also introduced to ideas of prejudice against the Germans from the Turkish immigrants. Hamide and German classmate, Chris, become very close and start to like each other. However, Hamide's dad will not allow this relationship to flourish, because he does not respect Chris as he is a German boy and would rather Hamide move back to Turkey and marry someone her dad has chosen for her. This shows strong stereotyping against the Germans and Hamide's father believes that all German boys are a bad influence and he looks down on them and sees his family as better and more important:

"Ich verbiete Ihnen." (p89)

"Hamide soll dann bald heiraten... zukünftige Ehe zerstören." (p59)

To conclude, I believe that the novel "Hamide spielt Hamide" gives a fairly accurate representation of the life of Turkish people who have immigrated to Germany. The novel provides information on varying aspects of Turkish life and shows their struggles in Germany and also their differences to German people and German society. We are introduced to different aspects of how the Turks have settled and how they are coping with their life in a new country. The novel gives a realistic insight into the life of Turks as it mentions that they experience racism for example from the Skinheads and are seen as thieves and that they smell of garlic. We also see how different the two groups are culturally. For example, the family structure in Turkey is very old fashioned compared to the modern, more familiar family structure we see in Germany. We also see a fairly accurate representation of the integration of the Turks due to the fact that many of them live in Turkish-only areas and do not speak German. The fact that the novel ends on a sad note with Hamide not receiving the outcome she has wished for, shows a realistic representation and is an example of how life for immigrants isn't always easy and that there are difficulties when moving from one country to another. On the other hand, the novel seems to be slightly unrealistic, especially the racism experienced by the Turks. For example, in the play the Skinheads are extremely offensive and full on racist against the Turks and write hateful comments on the classroom door. This is not so common in Germany and in Berlin for example, the Germans tend to be mostly accepting on the Turks as it is a multicultural city.

1390 words.

Bibliography

Source 1- "Hamide spielt Hamide" written by Annalies Schwarz in 1986, ISBN 9782278048786

Source 2- "Almanya – Willkommen in Deutschland" Film, 2011

Source 3- „Gastarbeiter- Willkommen in Deutschland“. Page 34, AQA, A-Level German, A2 Nelson Thornes, 2009

"Rassismus Leute" Page 50, AQA A-Level German, A2 Nelson Thornes, 2009

"Was sind die Vorurteile" Page 52, AQA A-Level German, A2 Nelson Thornes, 2009

"Berlin: Stadt der vielen Kulturen" Page 42, AQA A-Level German, A2 Nelson Thornes, 2009

Source 4- „GASTARBEITER“, SQA Materials, Revised Higher, Cassette 2, Seite B, Text 21

Source 5- "Ein Millionär will mit einem Trick das Burka-Gesetz aushelben, Welt N24

Source 6- „Muslime in Deutschland“, Scholar, Heriot-Watt University, Advanced Higher German Materials

Commentary on candidate evidence

The candidate evidence contained in this pack has achieved the following marks for the coursework assessment task.

Candidate A

The candidate was awarded **27 marks**.

Content

The candidate has chosen a concise title which makes clear the focus of the analysis and has chosen sources which work well together and clearly support analysis, although the majority of the essay is dependent on one source, leading to a lack of balance. He takes an analytical approach and presents reasoned and relevant arguments and consistently demonstrates an understanding of the focus of the study.

Style

The candidate presents detailed evidence from sources to support the conclusions made and includes a range of appropriate quotations from those sources. The use of critical terminology could have been further developed by mentioning, for example, the tone of the articles or the type of language used in them, although he does use phrases such as *'there are some...who would argue'*, *'what makes Fritze's case so remarkable...'*, *'but what Fritze dismisses is that...'*. The candidate maintains an appropriate register throughout.

Organisation

The candidate writes in an organised and structured way, although it might have been beneficial to evaluate each point of discussion in turn and present the arguments for and against rather than giving all the evidence for one point of view in the first part of the essay and then follow it with all the evidence against in the second part. He demonstrates writing which is coherent throughout and draws conclusions which relate directly to the title and chosen focus for analysis.

Candidate B

The candidate was awarded **15 marks**.

Content

The candidate has chosen a title which outlines the focus of the analysis but which requires her to consider not only the novel but also evidence relating to the situation of Turks in Germany, making her task more difficult. She has listed a number of sources but all the evidence presented in the essay relates solely to the novel. She does show some features of an analytical approach with some attempt at analysis and demonstrates some understanding of the focus of the study but fails to present evidence relating to the reality of life in Germany for Turkish immigrants.

Style

The candidate presents some evidence from the main source in an attempt to support the conclusions made. She includes a few quotations from the novel but these do not add a great deal to the analysis. She mostly maintains an appropriate register but does occasionally use the first person. There is little critical terminology used.

Organisation

The candidate does write with some sense of structure by examining various themes in turn and demonstrates writing which is largely coherent. She presents arguments and attempts to draw conclusions but these do not relate to the title and chosen focus for analysis.