11. The unification of Germany (1 hour 30 minutes)

(a) Germany was united in 1871, something which had seemed unlikely in 1848. Explain any two of the factors, which caused Germany to be unified in 1871.

There are various points that you could develop to answer this question:

- Explain the decline of Austria as a great power and up until 1848, the most hostile to a united Germany. To do this you might mention Austria’s economic decline (point out the significance of Austria’s absence from the Zollverein); the effects of costly wars in Italy; increasing problems in her multi-racial empire; and Austria’s isolation in Europe, especially following the Crimean War.

- A good link can be made with the previous point by explaining the increasing strength of Prussia at the same time (Prussia, of course, being the state, which led Germany to unification). Develop this by explaining the significance of economic developments in Germany (the Zollverein, the availability of raw materials, and the development of industrial infrastructure); the significance of Prussian army reforms (linking increasing military strength to the developing Prussian economy).

- Point out the changed relationship between Prussia and Austria that developed in the early 1850s following the collapse of Prussia’s Erfurt Union. Prior to this Prussia had accepted Austria’s dominant role over the German states.

- The role of Bismarck’s diplomacy. Briefly explain how he provoked war on three occasions that ultimately resulted in German unification.

- The role of nationalism. Demonstrate how this aided Bismarck in the pursuit of his policies.

- The international situation; the attitudes of Britain and Russia to German unification and the particular aims of Napoleon III of France.
(b) Compare the importance of at least three of these factors in explaining the unification of Germany in 1871.

This is a ‘mini-essay’ that needs an introduction, a main section and a conclusion.

- In your introduction you should point that this is a complex topic. The factors explaining German unification are very much interlinked, making a judgement on the relative importance of each difficult. Because of this I would advise considering all the factors mentioned in the solution to question (a).

- A good starting point to the main section would be to consider the role of Bismarck. Point out that his actions led eventually to the unification of Germany, even if this was not his intention. Then consider the factors which contributed to his success: the strength of Prussia; the weakness of Austria and the role of German nationalism; the international situation. Finally consider the changed relationship between Austria and Prussia. Argue that this was the starting point of the process which led to German unification.

- In the conclusion summarise the argument that Germany was united due to a combination of interrelated factors.

(Total marks 45)