

Question 2: With reference to the origin and purpose, assess the value and limitations of **SOURCE 1** for anybody studying the unification of Germany.

SOURCE 1: <https://history.state.gov/countries/issues/german-unification> from the US Office of the Historian. This is how this website presents itself “*The Office of the Historian is staffed by professional historians who are experts in the history of U.S. foreign policy and the Department of State and possess unparalleled research experience in classified and unclassified government records*” (Visited December 1st, 2020 12:50)

The next attempt at German unification, a successful one, was undertaken by Otto von Bismarck, the Prime Minister of Prussia. Bismarck was a proponent of “*smaller*” Germany, not to mention a master at the game of real-politik. German unification was achieved by the force of Prussia, and enforced from the top-down, meaning that it was not an organic movement that was fully supported and spread by the popular classes but instead was a product of Prussian royal policies.

The first war of German unification was the 1862 Danish War, begun over the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. Bismarck allied with Austria to fight the Danes in a war to protect the interests of Holstein, a member of the German Confederation.

The second war of German unification was the 1866 Austro-Prussian War, which settled the question of “*smaller*” versus “*greater*” Germany. This brief war (fought over the course of mere weeks) pitted Prussia and her allies against Austria and other German states. Prussia won and directly annexed some of the German states that had sided with Austria (such as Hanover and Nassau). In an act of leniency, Prussia allowed some of the larger Austrian allies to maintain their independence, such as Baden and Bavaria. In 1867 Bismarck created the North German Confederation, a union of the northern German states under the hegemony of Prussia. Several other German states joined, and the North German Confederation served as a model for the future German Empire.

The third and final act of German unification was the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, orchestrated by Bismarck to draw the western German states into alliance with the North German Confederation. With the French defeat, the German Empire was proclaimed in January 1871 in the Palace at Versailles, France. From this point forward, foreign policy of the German Empire was made in Berlin, with the German Kaiser (who was also the King of Prussia) accrediting ambassadors of foreign nations.

What do you need to do?

This question can give you six points. The answer consists of three different parts – a presentation of the origin and purpose of the selected text (source); a review of the text (source) according to the source-critical criteria historians use (authenticity / time / dependence / tendency) and finally a discussion of the value of the selected text (source) - value and limitations. To get a full score, all the parts must be included! For each missing part, there will be a points deduction. The last part - a discussion of the source value is so important that you lose several points if this part is not included (or is incorrect).

Example answer:

ORIGIN: <https://history.state.gov/countries/issues/german-unification> from the US Office of the Historian. This is how this website presents itself “*The Office of the Historian is staffed by professional historians who are experts in the history of U.S. foreign policy and the Department of State and possess unparalleled research experience in classified and unclassified government records*” (Visited December 1st, 2020 12:50).

Who wrote it = US Office of the Historian – under an official US State Department

When did the person write it = We don’t know, but this was the information given December 1st, 2020 at 12:50

Where did the person write it = USA

What is the source = It’s an official document from the State Government in the USA

This is the only information we have about the origin – so copy it and paste it in the answer.

PURPOSE:

Why did the person write it = To give an official US view of the unification of Germany (information/influence)

For **whom** did the person write it = To the general public that’s interested in the official US view of History

Authentic: We can check if it's authentic by checking the website-address. We can also send an e-mail and ask for a confirmation from the US Office of the Historian.

Time: It's written and published long after the event. This version is viewed in December 2020. So it's a non-contemporary source.

Dependence: This is a tertiary source (like an encyclopedia article). We don't know who wrote it and we have no references, so we don't know where the information used comes from. Since this source claims that it's published by the US Office of Historian we assume that a professional historian has made a professional selection of different sources that gives a balanced view of the German unification.

Tendency: It's a fairly neutral source, but a few expressions and slight tone of the article could be interpreted as little bit bias where the author shows his/her personal interpretation:

- The next attempt at German unification, a **successful** one, was undertaken by Otto von Bismarck
- Bismarck was a proponent of "smaller" Germany, not to mention **a master at the game** of real-politik.
- ...to fight the Danes in a war **to protect the interests** of Holstein
- In **an act of leniency**, Prussia **allowed** some of the larger Austrian allies to maintain their independence, such as Baden and Bavaria.
- ...**orchestrated by Bismarck** to draw the western German states into alliance with the North German Confederation

VALUE: It's an official State document from the US Office of the Historian. It tells us that it has been written by professional historians and is published by the US State as an official interpretation of history. Governmental papers will be read by many different nations as well as individuals including other professional historians. Therefore, it has to be carefully written and show an accepted view. The document was made long after the event(s) and has the advantage of hindsight.

LIMITATIONS: This is an official US view which might show an interpretation that benefits the USA. It's written long after the event(s) and therefore it can't be checked with anybody involved in the process. As a tertiary source certain selection of sources has been made. This process has been influenced by the traditions of historians trained in the US – working for the government. There is a slight tendency in the document...