

Ancient History

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J151**

General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course) **J051**

OCR Report to Centres

June 2013

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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Overview

This year saw a considerable rise in the candidature on all papers. This was most heartening for the examiners. The standard of the work presented showed that most candidates were familiar with what was required by the examination papers, and that they were aware of the need to use and evaluate the ancient sources which they had studied during the course. There were, however, still some candidates who did not make adequate use of the sources in the 3/8a/b questions. On the other hand, it was good to note that most candidates were making effective use of ancient source material in their Controlled Assessment tasks.

In general, it is worth reminding teachers that sources need to be seen in their historical context. In simple terms, to assess how useful they are, something needs to be known about what the source is, when it was written or produced and whether the person producing it knew what (s)he was talking about. In the Controlled Assessment in particular this aspect of critical analysis was not included by all candidates. Likewise, in the essays in the written examinations, candidates should be reminded of the importance of assessing the sources which they are using. On the other hand, in the 3/8b questions, candidates should be reminded that there is an historical issue in the question which needs exploring. In a number of cases candidates read the phrase 'how useful are the sources as evidence for...', and then simply talked about the sources, without addressing the idea of the sources utility in relation to a particular question. Whilst such approaches are given due credit, for higher marks candidates need to show factual knowledge of the sources and the issue, and an understanding of the issue in the question, as well as a thorough response to the presentation of the issue in the sources studied to gain the highest marks in all of the three Assessment Objectives.

There did not seem to be a major problem with finishing the paper for most candidates. In the few cases where questions were omitted, this was more likely due to the challenges of the particular issue. There were some rather short essays and a small number were incomplete. For the most part candidates were able to follow the structure of the paper and offer answers of appropriate length. Quite a few candidates did append extra material, either in the booklet or in extra sheets. Helpfully many candidates made clear that they were continuing answers elsewhere and labelled their extra material clearly, and this made it much easier for examiners to find and mark the continued work. There were however some candidates who did not do this and while examiners persevered to find where they had placed their continued answers, candidates would be better advised to take the time to set out their work clearly, so that they can be sure of getting the mark they deserve.

The Scoris layout, as last year, has generally helped candidates avoid overly lengthy answers, especially to the early questions in each option (1, 2(a), 2(b), 2(c); 6, 7(a), 7(b), 7(c)). However a few candidates who were allowed to use a computer to present their answers were not so constrained, and in a few cases this led to rather wordy answers where there was no need (and, more importantly, few marks available).

This year there were extra marks to be awarded for spelling, punctuation and grammar. There were relatively few candidates who scored very badly on this, and most candidates showed that they could communicate effectively in an examination setting. There remain a few candidates whose writing presents a considerable challenge: on screen marking can sometimes help with this, but it would be much better for some candidates to use technology to present their work effectively.

A031 The Greeks at War

It was clear from this year's responses that candidates were well-prepared for the paper by their teachers. There were many excellent responses that showed a pleasing grasp of detail and what the candidates knew was well applied to the questions set. As last year, Alexander the Great proved the more popular option. The most significant problems from last year remain: in 3a & 3b (and 8a & 8b) too many candidates fail to address AO3 explicitly in their answers, which made the awarding of these marks difficult.

The first question on each option is designed to allow candidates to recall some information. These questions do not always produce the results expected. Question 1 was perhaps on the face of it more straightforward than Question 6, but in fact the Battle of Salamis presented its own challenges. Some candidates were clearly put off by Question 6 (even though it is a bullet point in the specification), and there were a number who omitted this question.

The questions on the first passage on both options were generally done well, though there are still too many candidates who make their answer to the (c) question far too general. It is important to use the detail of the passage in all these early questions, and the (c) should not become a rather generalised appraisal of the source. There is still scope for improvement here, and candidates would benefit from further practice using the detail of the passage in their evaluation.

The second passage question (3(a)/3(b) and 8(a)/8(b)), as in previous years, presented a significantly greater challenge for candidates. The (a) question is focused primarily on the passage set, and there were some excellent answers that picked out detail relevant to the question and showed good understanding of the material, which satisfied AO1 and AO2. However there remains a problem with AO3 here, as too often candidates made a very general reference to source in their evaluation, or omitted the evaluative element altogether. The same thing can also occur in the (b) question, and some candidates rely in their answer to this too heavily on the passage set, rather than, as instructed, drawing on other material they have studied. There were some excellent answers across the two Options, but these questions do help differentiate between candidates.

In the essay question, evaluation is also very important. The bullet points serve as reminders to most candidates and there is less of a problem with answers that do not address AO3. However too many candidates present their answer as if the bullet points were an essay plan; this often weakens, rather than strengthens, an essay, because the discussion of the sources becomes very general and divorced from the relevant detail.

Another general problem is that some candidates do not focus their answer on the question set. This is particularly acute where there is an opportunity for narrative. In Question 4, many candidates leapt at the opportunity to discuss Thermopylae, and some answers became a more or less detailed narrative of events. In some cases candidates did not return to the question at all, but presented their account of the battle as if that were an answer. However most candidates did not fall into this trap and did return to use the quotation in an effective way. There was a similar challenge in Question 10, where some candidates wrote very general accounts of what Alexander did, without really addressing the issues raised by the question.

The best essays were clearly structured and articulated well-developed answers to the questions. It was a pleasure to see the direct responses of some candidates to Question 4; examiners were left in no doubt about the candidates' views on whether Leonidas did in fact waste Greek lives. In many cases candidates were able to support their arguments with a good range of detail and some impressive use of sources. There were also weaker responses, where there was limited specific detail and some appropriate but rather general narrative. Candidates

were generally able to deal with the full period for Option 1, where appropriate, but in Option 2 the end of Alexander's life tends to be less well-known. Candidates who were able to write confidently over the full time scale were highly commended by examiners. There were some very fine scripts submitted, and it is clear that students have enjoyed the challenges presented by the option they have followed.

Comments on individual questions

Option 1: The Greeks defend themselves, 499–479 BC

- Q1** Most candidates coped well with this question, though there were some confusing comments on the geography of Salamis, and some managed to discuss the battle as if it were a land confrontation. Some candidates gave only one reason, or repeated themselves.
- Q2(a)** Most candidates were able to select relevant detail from the passage, though some were confused by the reference to 'excessive enthusiasm for vengeance'.
- Q2(b)** This question proved more challenging, and examiners accepted a range of responses. Most candidates were able to discuss the abduction of women and the escalation of these incidents into the attack on Troy.
- Q2(c)** There are still too many answers that do not make any use of the passage in answering this question. The restricted space allowed by the new-style paper did prevent excessively long general responses, but to secure full marks candidates must make specific comments on the detail of the passage. Here they could comment on Herodotus' sources, though a significant number were very sure that Herodotus had no contact with Persians. A number also thought that the events referred to had happened recently, so that Herodotus would have been able to talk to eyewitnesses.
- Q3(a)** The best answers made good use of the detail from the passage itself, and ensured that they covered all three Assessment Objectives in their response. Weaker responses made little attempt to address AO3, so could only be rewarded for their 'personal response' under this Assessment Objective, and some made little use of the detail of the passage. Indeed some candidates drew extensively on other parts of Herodotus' narrative (in some cases then omitting these details in 3(b) where they were relevant). But the majority identified different aspects of the battle and its immediate aftermath. There are still some candidates who seem very unclear about what is happening in the set texts: some respondents upbraided Herodotus for not making clear which side the Plataeans were fighting on.
- Q3(b)** A significant number of candidates treated this as a repeat of 3(a) and did not take the opportunity to draw on their wider understanding of the Marathon campaign. There were some good discussions of the uncertainty in the Athenian camp before battle was joined, though relatively few mentioned the absence of Persian cavalry and the hoplite charge with which the battle commenced. Some candidates were disparaging about Herodotus' understanding of Greek warfare, though this did not always lead to a detailed analysis of his shortcomings. There were some good discussions of Greek fighting spirit and weaponry. Some candidates became confused about the role of Darius (and, indeed, Xerxes) on this occasion.
- Q4** This essay proved very popular with candidates, though a few only offered a simple narrative of Thermopylae in greater or lesser detail, without considering at all the implications of the quotation. However for many candidates this question drew out effective argumentation, and there were some spirited defences of what Leonidas did both from a Spartan perspective and, more broadly, from a wider Greek perspective.

Not all candidates were able to sum up what was achieved by Thermopylae (e.g. allowing time for a Greek withdrawal and the evacuation of Athens), and there were a few who baldly stated that Thermopylae was a Greek (or Spartan) victory. The best answers had a good grasp of the battle itself and the significance both of the site and what was achieved, and were able to present an effective answer to the question. Opinion mostly was against the opinion expressed in the quotation, though there were some articulate attacks on Leonidas' decisions.

Q5 This question proved significantly less popular, though there were some excellent answers. Candidates were in many cases able to contrast effectively Herodotus' depictions of individuals with the clarity of his accounts of battles. Individuals considered included Themistocles, Leonidas, Xerxes, and Miltiades, but there were some other interesting choices. Candidates ranged over a number of battles, and in some cases were able to use the contributions of individuals as part of their critique of particular battles.

Option 2: Alexander the Great, 356–323 BC

Q6 A small number of candidates did not answer this question. The majority were able to come up with two reasons, though in some cases the second reason seemed to the examiners to be a variation or development of the first. A number of candidates treated the question as if it were about Alexandria in Egypt, but this did not impact the mark.

Q7(a) Examiners accepted a variety of assessments of Alexander's character, as long as they were based on the passage. In some cases, the language used by candidates was unclear. Some candidates used the interpretations of Alexander's words quoted in the passage as the starting point for their answer.

Q7(b) The majority of candidates were able to demonstrate that they understood Alexander's thinking here in wanting to achieve an unequivocal victory that did not allow Darius to make any excuses for what happened, so that he 'gave up any hope of success and was convinced by clear-cut and utter defeat.'

Q7(c) There are still too many answers that do not make use of the passage in answering this question. However better responses were able to point to other sources for the battle, and a number of candidates focused on Plutarch's interest in character, though not all candidates agreed that the account given here was 'accurate'. A number were unconvinced by the direct reporting of Alexander's words and suggested that this showed the passage was not entirely reliable.

Q8(a) There were many strong responses to this question. Candidates were able to pick out a range of references to the companions from the passage, though some less good answers focused solely on Hephaestion. There were some interesting interpretations of the details selected, but some very effective answers.

Q8(b) Not all candidates drew on a wider range of material for this answer, choosing to use the passage. This made it much more difficult to address the issue of 'change'. The best answers were very clear on the developing relationship during the campaign between Alexander and his court, and were able to explain what changed as the expedition progressed. A good number of candidates were able to discuss the attempts to integrate Persians into the army, and there were some lively assessments of the responses to Alexander's increasing use of Persian customs. Many commented on his killing of Cleitus, though there were relatively few who could assess Alexander's state of mind in the final months of his life. There were some excellent evaluations of the sources, but too many candidates wrote very generally, or in some cases did not mention the sources by name at all. A few candidates failed to use the passage on the paper.

Q9 This essay was less popular than Q. 10. Weaker responses tended to offer rather general accounts of Olympias' influence, and were not very clear about the other significant figures. Better answers had considerable detail about Olympias' impact on Alexander's childhood, and were also able to deal with the influence of other figures such as Philip, Aristotle and Hephaestion. There were some good discussions of sources, and there were some interesting accounts of the strange stories preserved in our sources about the conception of Alexander.

Q10 There were some excellent responses to this question. Some weaker answers tended to a general narrative of Alexander's conquests without being very specific or explaining how this led to him being called 'the Great'. Stronger answers were able to point to a range of achievements which made Alexander stand out in his own time, and were able to support their discussion with a precise knowledge of the detail of battles won and territory gained and controlled. Many commented on his energy at the siege of Tyre and his ingenuity in unloosing of the Gordian knot. There were some critical accounts which took both Arrian and Plutarch to task for being too partial to Alexander, though there were also some rather weak treatments of the sources.

A032 The Rise of Rome

Option 1: The origins of Rome: The kings, 753–508 BC

- Q1** Most candidates showed a good knowledge of Numa – i.e. he was religious and peaceful - and could explain two developments although not always fully. Some confused kings; and a number thought Numa created the Senate. There was also some confusion between the temples/priests of Janus and Jupiter.
- Q2(a)** Generally well done – nearly all candidates made use of the passage and picked out relevant details and names. A number of candidates did omit initial details – particularly the twins being left on the river bank; and some went onto explain the background and the importance unnecessarily (this was only necessary for question 2(b)) – such a discussion wasted space and prevented the identification of relevant details and thus the gaining of straightforward marks.
- Q2(b)** Some good explanations here: most were able to link the story of the wolf and the twins to later Roman attitudes/values. Key indicators discussed were that the wolf was a sign of bravery / wildness / roughness / brutality and the humble origins as a sign of the future of Rome. Some candidates identified the survival of Romulus as a necessary precondition for the future of Rome and some more prescient responses discussed the connection with the divine (i.e. Mars) and developed the issue of a foundation myth.
- Q2(c)** It is pleasing to see more candidates evaluating with reference to details found in the source but a number are still not doing this and are relying on ‘generic’ evaluations. A number referred to the Preface but did not develop this sufficiently fully (i.e. Livy says he does not care if it is true or not; he is simply interested in showing Rome as ‘great’). The best answers identified specific points of the passage to question – i.e. mentioned two versions of the ‘she wolf’ and ‘prostitute’, that he wrote 700/500 years later without any sources to work with, and that the whole story sounds unreliable (the reference to ‘rumour’).
- Q3(a)** Candidates either gave a detailed summary of the passage or picked one or two elements to analyse the changing relationship – usually the rape; there were considerable opportunities for gaining greater marks here – for example, most did not mention or deal with the ‘amazement’ as a sign of relationship. Generally AO1 and AO2 were addressed well in responses. A good number of candidates though made no (or brief) reference to Livy and his context. Most offered a general idea of his writing; some mentioned the ‘aim’; most said that he wrote to glorify Rome. One glaring inaccuracy which needs to be corrected here is that Livy was being paid by Augustus – he was not. A number of candidates made this assertion at numerous points in the examination.
- Q3(b)** ‘How useful’ was not always addressed; knowledge of the preceding and following information was a bit thin and the resulting discussion centered on the passage therefore limiting possible reward at AO1. Most knew the Romans needed women for population increase; however not many explained about the wars, the rights given to the Sabine women after the rape, their role in ending those wars and the subsequent fusion – i.e. the emergence of Numa, as a Sabine, to the kingship. Much of what had been said in earlier questions about Livy as evidence was repeated – i.e. Livy’s aim was to praise Rome but he did not do research, just copied others, and wanted to find good and bad examples to teach Romans how to act. Many candidates did not address the usefulness of Livy in the last part of the question.

- Q4** This was the less popular essay question in this option. Those that chose this question could clearly explain the story of Aeneas and the flight from Troy (although very few included Evander and Hercules). Generally the evaluation of these stories was done well: there was good detail of Virgil, less so of Livy's version; most avoided confusion over the names and people; most took the view that much of the story is too mythological for an accurate history. Much of the evaluation of the sources was well done however there were standard statements about Livy's aims and the times he was writing in without really showing a good understanding of the situation and sometimes the evaluation lacked a specific focus on the material.
- Q5** This was the most popular of the essay questions by far. Most candidates chose Romulus or Numa and most candidates were also able to identify successfully the Tarquins in comparison (although these were sometimes confused and it is important to remember that Sextus was not a King). The best answers were able to record good detail for two reigns and then identify/compare reasons for relative success and failure and make judgements. However, for many candidates two detailed kings proved challenging: occasionally this meant a lot on Romulus / Numa and a brief mention of another. Further to this point, the majority of responses wrote about one King and then the next – a more focused comparison was lacking – and a number did not reach an overall conclusion. Distinction was made between the accuracy of Livy on the reigns - seeing Tullus as more credible; Virgil was occasionally used, usually to say he did not have anything to tell us. In many cases, the source evaluation was not integral to the argument itself but a 'bolt-on' at the end of the essay.

Option 2: Hannibal's invasion and defeat, 218–146 BC

- Q6** Most candidates knew who Fabius was but not all were able to expand or develop what they knew into two distinct tactics. The key themes identified were – delay / scorched earth / avoidance of battle. There was a minor confusion with Scipio in places.
- Q7(a)** Nearly all candidates were able to answer this by using the passage. This question requires a focus on the passage and the details it contains but in many cases candidates tried to expand upon the event by bringing in external information at the expense of getting a reasonable coverage of the passage.
- Q7(b)** Most candidates were able to identify at least one reason and link this to an explanation as to why the Carthaginians were successful. The hard work and 'agonized labour' of the Numidians was frequently mentioned but Hannibal as a leader was generally less well done; here candidates would tend to include external information / knowledge – few mentioned the 'calling together' specifically which would have guaranteed the mark.
- Q7(c)** A lot of answers were generalised views of Polybius but often a generic discussion with little relevance to the passage. Examples of this generic approach would be - he had witnesses (of this journey?) / he did research, visited places (so knew how dangerous it was?) / some mentioned the inscription after this passage in reference to numbers lost.

- Q8(a)** A number of candidates did this question well but many would have done this better had they focused more specifically on the wording of the question. There was an unwillingness simply to identify the tactics, armour and weapons from the passage. 'How far' was ignored by a number so that they answered by saying - *this passage tells us* - without any evaluation. Linking to battle was less successful; disposition of troops was not developed clearly and was the least successfully used part of the passage. There was a timing issue for many who spent too much time on a) and b) therefore leaving little time for assessing the sources. For many candidates, evaluation of the sources was fairly generalised – Polybius and Livy were not always distinguished.
- Q8(b)** Many candidates continued their answer for 8(a) by giving more details of Hannibal's successes at Cannae showing good knowledge but then not enough detail about the earlier reasons for success. Thus the treatment of other battles was rather vague in places but where candidates had detail on Trebia, Trasimene, Ticinus it was generally good. There tended to be a lot of focus on tactics and not a great deal on the other aspects – Hannibal always used the foolishness of the Roman commanders well. With regard to evaluation, a number of candidates did not address the issue of how useful after the first sentence. Livy was confused with Polybius at times and Polybius sometimes thought to precede Livy as a writer; but he was generally felt to be more reliable because he did research.
- Q9** The more popular of the two essay questions. With regard to factual detail, many were able to identify strengths and weaknesses although some gave information about Cannae or focused purely on a narrative account of Zama: only a few knew the details of Spain and Carthaginian unwillingness to support Hannibal. With regard to understanding and argument, opinions were divided; for some it was mostly weaknesses and others mostly strengths – in general a decent argument was made. Some candidates discussed the failure to capture Rome in terms of a single factor among many but a number just saw it as directly responsible. Many candidates did not reach a final conclusion. Evaluation of authors tended to be general, and at times confused. Rarely were specific selections evaluated. For example many stated that Polybius was the most reliable because he was nearer the times when writing and because he talked to witnesses, and knew Hannibal's teacher.
- Q10** Generally this elicited weaker answers than question 9: a few followed the guidance offered in the bullet points and showed the consequences for each side whilst some chose the question without any specific knowledge of the peace treaty terms or Livy's version of this – these generally did not have the information from Livy on terms as clear as they needed to judge subsequent events. The best responses discussed the terms of peace – the indemnity, restrictions on fighting, loss of fleet and army and began to make some judgements based on these details.

A033 Women in Ancient Politics

There was a considerable rise in the number of candidates for this unit to over 1000, which is most encouraging. The majority of candidates opted to answer questions on Cleopatra, and had clearly enjoyed studying the topic, and been engaged by this enthralling character. The substantial minority who had studied Agrippina had also showed a good knowledge of the complexities of Imperial politics, and had been intrigued by many aspects of Agrippina's relationship with both Nero and others in her circle.

In general, candidates worked well with the space which was given to them on the examination paper, and seemed confident in responding to the different types of questions on the paper. There are still some candidates who do not look closely enough at the wording of the question. In particular, the passage-based questions 2(a)/7(a) require candidates simply to draw details from the passage, and not to add commentary or extra details. Likewise in questions 2(b)/7(b) candidates are reminded that they need to explain what is happening, rather than just narrate what is in the passage.

It was encouraging for examiners to read some lengthy essay responses which showed a strong, thorough knowledge and understanding of the period studied.

Comments on Individual Questions

Option 1: Cleopatra and her impact on Roman politics, 69–30 BC

- Q1** Mostly well answered, with many candidates coming up with two reasons. Some separated out one reason into two – e.g. suggesting that Egypt was wealthy and had a lot of corn which was essential for Rome, but without developing what was meant by 'wealthy'. There was also some confusion about Egypt's status in the Roman Empire before it was taken over by Octavian. In some cases candidates wrote about why Cleopatra might have wanted the relationship, rather than why the Roman politicians might have pursued a political relationship.
- Q2(a)** Candidates are reminded to give adequate detail based on the passage, and not to bring in extra knowledge from outside. The focus is on the description as given in the passage: the best answers simply outlined what was happening in the passage, without adding much commentary.
- Q2(b)** A number of candidates took this question to be about the importance of the meeting, and simply gave their perspective on why the meeting was important, rather than explain how the passage showed that the meeting was important.
- Q2(c)** There were some strong answers to this question, but, as in previous years, a substantial number of candidates simply outlined their thoughts on the accuracy of Plutarch in general, pointing out when he was writing and his lack of sources. The key issue in this type of question is the accuracy of the details in the passage, and candidates should be reminded to refer to these details in order to develop their answers.

- Q3(a)** This question led to a variety of responses. The best included the key details from the passage, and showed a secure understanding of the different methods used by Cleopatra in her attempts to gain sympathy from Octavian. All too often, however, candidates did not base their responses firmly on the passage – some, clearly able candidates based on other answers in their scripts, gave out examples from outside the passage, but failed to make adequate use of the passage itself. Teachers should also be reminded that a full analysis of ‘in what ways’ will require candidates to consider how reliable the passage itself is. Whilst the generic evaluations of the author will gain some marks, care is needed to ensure that the candidate responds to the passage with reference to details in it.
- Q3(b)** Although some candidates produced excellent responses to this question, many failed to recall the situation near the end of her life, and did not show much understanding of the difficulties in which she found herself. There were some generic treatments of the sources, which included Horace, Propertius, Virgil, Suetonius and Dio Cassius. There was also a conflation of the events near the end of her life, with many assuming that she committed suicide immediately after the battle of Actium. Candidates should be reminded that this question has a wider scope than 3(a), and that they should show knowledge of other sources. Candidates would be well-advised to focus on the issue in the question – here Cleopatra’s situation at the end of her life, and then move to the nature of the sources to support their answers.
- Q4** This essay proved the most popular. Candidates’ knowledge of Cleopatra’s relationship with key Roman politicians (in particular Julius Caesar and Mark Antony) varied considerably, with some giving very detailed accounts, well supported with a thorough knowledge of the key sources. The best answers showed a clear understanding of what Cleopatra might have stood to gain from her relationships with each of these. There were some effective arguments in relation to her children both by Julius Caesar and by Mark Antony. Some candidates did not make effective use of the bullet points, and ignored the need to discuss and evaluate the sources that they had used. The best answers included this evaluation as they worked through their answer.
- Q5** Fewer candidates chose this question, but there were still some excellent answers, which showed a clear understanding of Cleopatra’s changing situation through her life, and the challenges which she faced, both within Egypt and in the world of Roman politics. Candidates did not always support their answers with effective references to sources, but those who did developed some intelligent evaluation of the poets (in particular Horace) and discussed the lack of Egyptian sources effectively.

Option 2: Agrippina the Younger and her influence on Roman politics, AD 41–59

- Q6** Most candidates were able to give two reasons, with many showing a good understanding of the political situation within the Imperial household.
- Q7(a)** Most candidates were able to pick out the key elements from the passage. Some, however, seemed to ignore the opening words, and simply discuss Agrippina’s involvement in politics more generally. A number of candidates also took to developing the points in the passage, and therefore failed to cover them all. Candidates should be reminded that the key to these questions is simply to pick out the key points – there is no need to develop them with wider contextual knowledge or discuss their significance.

- Q7(b)** This was for the most part well answered, with candidates addressing the question set and not just the topic. In the main, candidates chose to look at the episode of the envoys from Armenia, and point out that a woman being involved in this way would have been seen as unacceptable. Some candidates, however, failed to note that they needed to 'explain' the reaction, and simply outlined the reaction.
- Q7(c)** The best answers chose a few details from the passage, and discussed how reliable they were likely to be, often with reference to Tacitus' sources or his 'bias' against women. There were still a considerable number of answers which made no reference to the passage. The question directs candidates to look at the passage, and to gain full marks it is essential that they look at the passage, and base their answers on it.
- Q8(a)** This question produced some excellent responses, which considered carefully the difficulties which Nero faced, and then gave the relevant detail from the passage to support their answer. Many, for example, pointed out that Agrippina knew about poisoning, and other types of plots, and, therefore, was able to take the relevant precautions to ensure her safety. There were two key weaknesses in some answers however: in the first place, not covering all the methods that Nero tried – in particular missing the final one – and then not drawing out the difficulties based on the response to Nero's plotting as shown in the passage. Beyond this, many candidates failed to evaluate the passage, although there were a pleasing number who did so effectively. Candidates should be reminded that for the highest marks in AO3 they need to evaluate the details in this passage, so that they can fully respond to the idea of 'in what ways'.
- Q8(b)** This question produced a wide range of responses. Some chose to simply use the passage, which was intended as a starting point, as these questions require a wider knowledge of the source material. The best answers included a range of source material such as coins, Tacitus and Suetonius to support their arguments about the increasing power and dominance of Agrippina in the Imperial Court. They showed that Nero could not stand such interference, and that he had to take action.
- Q9** This essay proved the more popular of the two, with some strong responses outlining Agrippina's relationship with Nero. Many revelled in the more salacious details of the relationship, and showed how the relationship developed from his childhood through to her death. Whilst the factual information was often quite well delivered, only the best responses addressed effectively the issue of how her ambition changed the relationship. Candidates often gave details from Tacitus and Suetonius, although there was some confusion between the two on occasions, and there was effective use of the coins to give another dimension on the relationship. Some of the weaker answers based their answers entirely on the passages printed on the paper. Whilst they could be used to some degree, they did not lead to very satisfactory answers.
- Q10** Answers to this question often suggested that Agrippina was particularly important, and then looked at her relationship with each of the emperors. The best included consideration of how Agrippina was important (in particular in her relationship with Claudius and the appointment of Nero as emperor), and also looked at the influence of other people, in particular the freedmen under Claudius, and the roles of Seneca and Burrus under Nero. Whilst there was some effective evaluation of the sources, this was often not based on a detailed knowledge of what they say about her role.

A034 Controlled Assessment

As in previous years, it was evident to the moderators that candidates had worked hard and found the challenges of controlled assessment engaging. Many pieces of work showed evidence of candidates conducting thorough research, and making excellent use of both the internet and a wide variety of both archaeological and literary evidence. It was also particularly pleasing to see the range of topics which had been considered by candidates, and that each candidate whose work was seen by the moderators seemed to have been able to find things which were interesting and relevant to the titles set.

Over-all, the moderators were impressed with the standard of the work, and felt that most candidates had a good understanding of what was required in using ancient sources. Once again, however, it is worth stating that the best answers worked from the original sources (as requested both on the question paper and in the questions themselves) to construct an argument, and showed a thorough knowledge not only of the sources themselves, but also of their context and the possible interpretations of these sources. As in the examination papers, candidates are well advised to think about content and context and then use these to help analyse and evaluate sources to come to a conclusion.

Most candidates stuck to the word limit, but in a few cases there were scripts which were considerably over the limit. Teachers should be reminded both in their guidance of students and in their marking that the word limit features in the AO1 marking criteria, and that any work which does not conform to the descriptors given for each level in the marking grid should be marked appropriately.

One concern which arose in the moderation process was that a number of candidates had clearly cut and pasted material from websites. In some cases such material formed a substantial proportion of the answer submitted, despite the fact that it had little relevance to the question set. Teachers are reminded that such copying verbatim from the internet is not allowed, and is classed as plagiarism. While candidates may have access to the internet during their research they should not have access to it whilst they are writing their controlled assessment.

There was also evidence of some teachers or candidates changing the questions that were set. This is not allowed and is a most unhelpful practice for the candidates, because although the changed questions remained in the same area as the original questions, they were not asking the same thing and work must be assessed and moderated against the question set by OCR. Although such simplification might have been intended to help weaker candidates, it undoubtedly restricts all candidates in their potential. The questions are designed to ensure that all the assessment objectives can be met by all candidates: changing a question can make it very difficult for some of the objectives to be met.

The moderators would like to thank teachers for the care in marking the work – the clear marking with AO1/2/3 written down the side, some pertinent comments and additional points all helped to make it apparent how the marks had been awarded. The comments of many teachers on the cover sheets were also very helpful. In a very few cases it was evident that the comment was accurate – e.g. some good factual knowledge – but that this was inconsistent with the mark given, and it may be helpful for teachers refer back to the descriptors in the levels grid to double check that the mark they have awarded does indeed match the comment they have made on work.

Topic by Topic Analysis

Option 1: Ancient Egypt 3000–1000 BC

How far does Ancient Egyptian art help us to understand the daily lives of Ancient Egyptians?

This question was well received by candidates, with a considerable number choosing to pursue it. Whilst some of the responses were excellent, there was a tendency to rather general answers, which were not well supported by appropriate source-material, or tended to 'go off the point', and look, for example, extensively at Egyptian beliefs in the after-life, and how they were represented in art. Such an area could have been used more effectively, but once it came to dominate answers, and was not well-tied into the question, it became problematic. There was also a tendency to narratives of Egyptian life, rather than a reasoned historical argument looking at the idea of 'how far' in the question. Some candidates produced an excellent range of materials, but in interpreting and evaluating them did not consider the context within which they were produced: it would be helpful to consider when the item was produced (or at least, whether we know when it was produced) in order to help place it in a wider context. Whilst some candidates had a strong sense of the structure of Egyptian society, others did not, which caused difficulties for them in the writing of their answers, and the interpretation of the evidence.

How far does the evidence help us to understand how the Ancient Egyptians conducted military campaigns?

This question proved popular, with many candidates looking in detail at the archaeological evidence, and drawing interesting conclusions from a wide variety of appropriate evidence. A key differentiator between different responses was whether the candidates addressed the specific question asked: some focused very too narrowly the idea of weaponry, which meant that their responses were not full enough to be classified as thorough. Those who explored more fully the idea of military campaigns were on occasion tempted to stray too far from the heart of the question, and look at political questions. In the main, though, the evidence was used effectively, and candidates presented an excellent range of supporting material. In a number of answers there was an impressive sense of the change between different periods in Egyptian history: the main challenge, though, for some candidates, was to ensure that such points were consistently supported with source-material. Where such material was used, however, it was impressive to see that candidates were able to make effective use of a wide range of evidence, in particular archaeological, to support their arguments.

Option 2: Ancient Crete: Minoan Civilisation 2000–1400 BC

How useful are the ancient sources in helping us to understand the importance of religion in Minoan society?

Answers on this topic made extensive use of the archaeological evidence from Crete. This was often intelligently interpreted, with the best answers considering how reliable the evidence was, and whether the reconstructions that we see today are accurate. Some candidates showed a wide variety of sources and an excellent understanding of the period.

How far does the evidence allow us to understand the causes of the decline of Minoan civilisation?

Answers on this topic were not common. Some were very well researched and had used a wide range of relevant sources. However, some showed a tendency to quote secondary sources in discussing rival archaeologists' theories and there was a scarcity of primary sources used. Use of illustrations was often lacking, even in the case of students who had evidently visited Crete.

Option 3: Troy and the Mycenaeans 1450–1100 BC

How much can we learn from the ancient sources, both literary and archaeological, about the expansion of Mycenaean power in the Aegean?

Although not a popular option the answers that were seen were thoroughly researched and demonstrated a good understanding of the background of this question. Sources used included Homer, as expected, plus an assortment of archaeological references ranging from pots to religious statuary and weapons. References to archaeological remains at Mycenae were generally accurate.

How clear an understanding of Mycenaean religious practices can we gain from the ancient sources?

This question was well answered by the candidates who attempted it. There was a considerable range of detail from both archaeological evidence from Mycenae and Tiryns in particular, and in many cases good use of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, with some candidates also making judicious use of the *Homeric Hymns*. In general the archaeological evidence was well handled, with some excellent description and analysis of the finds at Mycenae, in particular in relation to burial practices. These were often contrasted with those described in the *Iliad*. Some candidates could have given more consideration to the relationship between the archaeological evidence and the Homeric poems, and, in particular, in the nature of Homeric poetry and the questions surrounding the chronological relationship between the poems and the archaeological evidence.

Option 4: Ancient Persia 630–499 BC

How clear an understanding can we gain from the ancient sources of the reign of any one Persian king?

There were some excellent responses to this question, which showed a thorough knowledge not only of the Persian inscriptional evidence, but also appropriate use of Herodotus' account of their chosen Persian king. On occasion candidates took rather obvious lines in the analysis of both these types of sources: the Persian inscriptions were clearly biased and showed exaggeration, wanting to present the king in the best light, whilst Herodotus may have been anti-Persian etc. It would have been good for candidates to look more closely at the context of some of these sources to consider more fully how this might affect our understanding of how the kings are presented.

How much can we learn from Ancient Persian art about Persian society?

This question was not popular and the quality of the essays varied dramatically. Responses often showed evidence of useful trips to the British Museum and discussion of the Oxus Treasure. In weaker answers, cross referencing sometimes focused on modern cultural practice or even the cultural practice of a different ancient civilisation. There were however some outstanding essays on this topic with excellent use made of a wide range of sources.

Option 5: The Hellenistic World 323–133 BC

To what extent do the ancient sources help us to understand the role of the Hellenistic monarch?

There were some excellent responses to this question and candidates had clearly worked hard and had an impressive grasp of the period. Thorough use was made of a wide variety of sources both literary and archaeological to investigate the question thematically. At the weaker end of the spectrum, responses tended to deal with the question by reign chronologically and lacked cross referencing.

How far do the ancient sources help us to understand the scientific developments during the Hellenistic period?

Responses to this question were impressive in the breadth of their understanding and their use of a wide range of source material to support their arguments. Candidates clearly enjoyed the opportunity to write about a wide-ranging topic, and look at all manner of scientific developments – such as medicine, developments in siege-warfare, understanding of the size of the universe and the advances in mathematics. There were a number of successful attempts to place these developments in the wider context of the Hellenistic World, which showed how the developments in thinking were related to the political demands of the time. Whilst answers acknowledged the challenges posed to the historian by the burning of the library in Alexandria, there was a tendency on occasion to use later, fragmentary sources without questioning their accuracy. However some candidates tended to describe various wonderful inventions with little focus on the demands of the question.

Option 6: The Celts c. 500 BC–AD 500

How accurate a picture of life in any one Celtic society can we gain from its art and sculpture?

This question was answered using several Celtic societies, including 'Gauls' and British Celts. Besides the more famous sources such as the Gundestrup cauldron and the Battersea shield, a whole range of artefacts including jewellery and metalwork was used. Some weaker responses were unable to define exactly which society they were discussing and consequently their analysis was superficial. In discussing Gaul and Celtic Britain, some candidates considered the arrival of the Romans marked the end of this society whereas others continued down to the end of the period.

How far does the evidence help us to understand the growth and expansion of any one Celtic society in this period?

Answers almost invariably contained a good variety of sources, ranging from archaeological to literary, and usually with reference to coins too. Celtic societies selected included the Gauls, Catuvellauni, Durotriges, Galatia and Celtiberia. Some excellent and diverse responses to this question were seen.

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