

GCSE

Ancient History

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J151**

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

OCR Report to Centres June 2016

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

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A031 The Greeks at War

General Comments:

Examiners were pleased to see a wide range of excellent responses to this year's paper, reflecting some high quality teaching in this subject. Candidates were generally well-prepared for the paper and were able to focus on what was required at each stage. In the Alexander option, the use of a visual source for Question 7 does seem to have caused some candidates to find the question challenging, but most adapted well and were able to show what they knew. The most significant problem from last year remains: in 3a & 3b (and 8a & 8b) too many candidates fail to address AO3 explicitly in their answers, despite the clear instructions in the question wording, which makes the awarding of these marks difficult.

This year there were fewer issues with candidates not indicating which question they were addressing. In a very few instances question numbers were omitted from the left hand column, or were entered incorrectly; and a very few candidates mixed together questions (e.g. 1a, 2b, 2c) without indicating where the break between different questions should be. Examiners do their best to disentangle such answers, but this is not always straightforward. Candidates should be strongly encouraged to set out their work clearly, and allow some space between the separate answers. Where a candidate feels it is imperative to add further material after an answer has been completed, this must be clearly marked (with asterisks or the like), and it is helpful if the examiner is directed to a specific page to find the extra material. Where candidates choose to deal with question in a different order than that set out on the paper, it is important they make very clear what they are doing, both for the marker and for themselves – students sometimes fail to answer all the questions when they do this because it is harder for them to check their own progress.

In answering the opening questions (Questions 1 and 6) which challenge candidates to recall information, there are still a very few candidates who compose a mini-essay when something much simpler is required. Examiners are simply looking for two separate elements, best set out as two paragraphs; one of these needs to be developed a little further. As marks are only awarded for AO1, there is no requirement to present an extended discussion or an evaluation of sources.

This year in Question 6 it was sometimes difficult to see that two different reasons were being set out.

The sub-questions in Question 2 were generally well done, though the (c) question was often answered in a very general way without any use of the details of the passage, though better responses picked up on details such as the reference to 7 ships which suggested some close research. There were some interesting discussions of 'it is said' which showed a good understanding of what was required here. The use of a visual source proved quite challenging for some in Question 7, and some candidates struggled to identify relevant elements to discuss. Some responses to the (c) question were rather unconvincing.

The second passage question (3(a)/3(b) and 8(a)/8(b)), as in previous years, proved a more significant challenge for candidates, as it was intended to. The (a) question is designed to be answered from the set passage, and there were some excellent responses that picked out appropriate details from the passage and demonstrated a sound understanding of the content, which satisfied AO1 and AO2. However as has been commented on in previous years, the AO3 element is much more problematic, as too often candidates made at best a very general reference to the source in their evaluation, or omitted any evaluation of the source altogether. This 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 explicitly instructed in the question, drawing on other

material they have studied. While examiners understand that a few candidates may feel that they have said what they need to say in response to 3(a)/8(a), it is not possible to carry marks forward from one answer to another. It is important to reinforce to candidates that the broader scope of the (b) question is reflected in the greater range of marks for AO3. There were once again some very pleasing answers across the two options, and these questions do continue to differentiate effectively between candidates.

In the essay question, it is very important for candidates to address AO3 explicitly as suggested in the bullet points. However there are still too many candidates who present their response to the question as if the bullet points were an essay plan; this often weakens, rather than strengthens, an essay, because the discussion of the sources can become unfocused and divorced from the detail used elsewhere in the essay. Rather too often the essay is brought to an end by a lengthy paragraph on the sources which does not relate to the question and is sometimes left to stand in place of a formal conclusion which might help draw together the threads of the argument.

This year examiners noted that some candidates were using prepared paragraphs of generalised evaluative commentary, often repeated word-for-word in different questions. This approach tends to produce work suggestive of Level 3 at best, as a generalised response like this rarely relates directly to the question the candidate is supposed to be answering. Examiners feel this contributes little to the answers of the majority. In a very few cases, these generalised paragraphs can be of some length and a more focused paragraph directed towards the question and the source elements actually used to answer it would be significantly better.

Another problem which has been commented on before is that some candidates do not address the demands of the question directly in their response. This is especially noticeable where the question presents an opportunity for extended description or narrative. In Question 9, many candidates leapt at the opportunity to narrate what happened at the Battle of the River Granicus, and some answers became a more or less detailed description of what happened. In a small number of cases candidates did not return to the question, but presented their account of the battle as if that were an answer. Some candidates, who no doubt had hoped for a different question, chose to present a detailed account of a different battle, sometimes without any real indication why this was relevant to the question. To get marks in the top Level, it is very important for candidates to keep their answers focused on what the question is asking. There were, of course, many very well-judged answers to the essay questions, and examiners hope to encourage more candidates to adopt a more analytic approach.

The best essays were clearly organised and candidates kept returning to the key terms of the question throughout, using appropriate topic sentences at the start of each paragraph. It was a great to see the direct responses of some candidates to Question 9; they presented a well-directed assessment of what happened at the River Granicus, and were able to make a judgment about what Alexander achieved at this early stage in his invasion, often making useful comparisons with other battles. Weaker responses often offered a largely narrative account, occasionally in chronological order, but without dealing with the issues raised in the question. In Option 2 the end of Alexander's life tends to be less well-known, and some candidates who attempted Question 10 struggled to select relevant examples to assess. But there were many excellent responses in both Options where candidates demonstrated an excellent grasp of detail across the specification, which they used to address the question in depth.

General presentation remains an issue for a small number of candidates. It is helpful to examiners if candidates can present their work clearly. It is worth remembering that the scanning of scripts can make some types of pen problematic where there is bleed-through from one side of paper to the other. Some candidates could usefully double space their work so that it is easier to read: this can be an issue for those with large writing that fills the line, and is also well worth considering for those using a computer, as some printed papers present a dense mass of text which is quite hard for examiners to read on screen. Where an alternative method of

presentation is used, it is important to make sure that the SPaG grid is filled out. Relatively few candidates failed to secure a decent mark for SPaG, but there certainly were some that were challenging to read on-screen. Very small writing can be a particular problem.

Overall, examiners were once again impressed with the quality of work produced by candidates under stressful conditions and it is clear that candidates across both options have benefitted from some stimulating and enjoyable discussion in the classroom.

Comments on Individual Questions:

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

Question 5 appealed to significantly more candidates than Question 4.

Question No. 1

This proved a more challenging question than was anticipated. Most candidates focused on the significance of Marathon at the time, but some chose to consider the importance of the modern race. Weaker answers could be very confused about the situation at Marathon, with some even considering it a Persian victory.

Question No. 2

The (a) question proved accessible to most candidates, and the majority of candidates were able to select relevant details from the passage. Some weaker answers focused only on what either the Athenians or the Persians did, and some were very short. The (b) question was also answered very effectively, for the most part, though the story about the Alcmaeonidae was often omitted or oddly interpreted (some thought 'Alcmaeonidae' was a man). The (c) question, as usual, produced some very general responses which were difficult to reward beyond Level 3, but better answers recognised how Herodotus' residence in Athens would have given him access to information about the battle, and many noted 'it was said' as evidence for Herodotus' use of evidence.

Question No. 3

There were many excellent responses to (a) that made good use of the detail of the passage to pick out both positive and negative aspects of Themistocles' character. Responses were generally stronger on AO1 and AO2, but there were some good discussions of the sources Herodotus could have used, including Aristides, and a number of candidates noted the negative aspects of Themistocles' later career. Examiners once again noted that many answers failed to directly address AO3. The passage could also be used to good effect in (b), but stronger answers often focused on the Battle of Salamis, and some also commented on Themistocles' role in the development of the Athenian navy. There were some underdeveloped responses to AO3 here, which brought the overall mark down a little. It is really important that candidates answer the question in full and so cover all three Assessment Objectives where they apply.

Question No. 4

The best answers directly addressed 'always' in their discussion, and showed a good understanding of the challenges facing Xerxes when he came to the throne (especially the revolt in Egypt) and also his reluctance to contemplate the invasion in the account of Herodotus. Not all candidates made much of Mardonius' role in persuading a reluctant king, and relatively few mentioned the dreams. However candidates were generally sounder on the detailed preparations for the invasions, though very few put these in the context of the earlier, failed invasions. Some candidates argued that Xerxes was very committed to the invasion of Greece, but then rather passed over his decision to leave after the Battle of Salamis. In the evaluation of Herodotus' account, there was generally very little attempt to explain how he could have known about the role of Mardonius and the importance of the dreams.

Question No. 5

This question provoked some interesting discussions of the Battle of Salamis and what it shows us about the strength and weaknesses of the Greeks. Candidates were usually happier discussing the differences between the fleets of the two sides, the nature of the strait between the mainland and Salamis and the commitment of the Greek forces to fight for their freedom. There was less discussion of the divisions within the Greek camp and the differing strategies for keeping the Persians at bay. The evaluation of Herodotus (for AO3) tended to be rather general and not always focused on the question.

Option 2: Alexander the Great, 356-323 BC

Candidates were evenly divided between the optional essays.

Question No. 6

This question proved more challenging for candidates than expected. Some candidates presented one reason, elaborated to some degree; there were some stronger accounts that looked at the equipment, training and leadership of the phalanx. A very few candidates appear to have been unclear as to what they were supposed to discuss.

Question No. 7

Examiners felt that some candidates were not expecting a visual source to be used, though many coped very well with it. In (a) most candidates were able to pick out where Alexander was in the mosaic and use details of what he was doing. There were some differing interpretations of the visible detail. Most answers focused primarily in (b) on Darius' role in the battle. There were divided opinions on his leadership; some argued that he was close to the battle front and so a good leader, though others, perhaps more convincingly, used the expression on Darius' face, his outstretched arm and the angle of his chariot to argue that Darius here displays bad leadership and is running away. There were some answers that focused on what they could remember of other accounts of the battle, rather than using the detail in the illustration; in some cases these were even quoted. Responses to (c) were in some cases very general. Some weaker responses argued that the artist could not have been present at that location in the battle, which, while true enough, suggests that they had not thought through the value of this source before the exam. However stronger answers were able to consider the nature of mosaic illustrations like this, and used the date to good effect. Many made the good point that the damage to the mosaic does make it harder to interpret, while they also showed that the visible detail fits in with the surviving accounts of the battle. A few argued that the mosaic was based on the work of Plutarch and Arrian and therefore reliable.

Question No. 8

There were some excellent responses to the (a) question here, and many candidates were able to draw from the passage a number of aspects of Alexander's character highlighted by Arrian. A few responses diverted into more general narratives of the events (such as the death of Cleitus) which drew them away from the passage. AO3 was not always effectively addressed, and some answers to this (and also the (b) question) can be very short, considering the number of marks available. Those responses which did address AO3 often focused on the problems arising from Arrian's partiality for his hero. A few candidates commented on 'barbarian' in line 2, and there were some interesting discussions of what Arrian calls 'these serious faults'. The (b) question was generally answered reasonably, though many candidates seemed reluctant to address the issue of 'weaknesses' in Alexander. However there were some answers that provided very little detail about Alexander's weaknesses and instead produced a mini-essay on the reliability of the ancient accounts with very little relevant content. Such responses could score reasonably in AO3 but were unlikely to secure good marks for AO1 and AO2.

Question No. 9

This was a popular essay question, and candidates generally were prepared to argue about the River Granicus and its relation to other victories achieved by Alexander. There were some champions of the Granicus on the grounds that it was the first battle (and so important both for Greek morale and to send a message to Darius himself) and also because of the need to overcome the obstacle of the river crossing. Other candidates argued that Tyre or Issus or Gaugamela were in fact much greater. The weakest responses showed only a limited grasp of what happened at the Granicus, sometimes confusing it with other battles or writing very generally.

Question No. 10

The strongest answers were able to set out a range of 'achievements' after the death of Darius which they could then assess in some detail. There were some interesting discussions of Alexander's establishing himself as Persian king, his chasing down of Bessus, his domination of the remaining areas of the Persian empire and his march into India. All of these provided good opportunities for candidates to address the question to good effect. Weaker responses were very unclear what happened after the death of Darius, and so struggled to develop an argument beyond an assertion that Alexander did indeed achieve very little.

A032 The Rise of Rome

General Comments:

There were some truly outstanding scripts in both options which is testament to excellent teaching and commendable scholarship. The trend of more centres opting for the Hannibal option has not changed.

The successful preparation of candidates for the A03 aspect of the assessment is continuing to show in answers (Interpretation, Evaluation and Response). Reflections from last year still stand - discussion of sources and evidence is much more related to details that have been referred to in the given passages or in candidates' writing and there is less frequent, generalised generic description tagged on at the end of answers. However, some still believe Polybius to have been old enough to have witnessed Zama and it was disappointing how many candidates did not make better use of their knowledge of Plutarch on the later Hannibal questions.

It is pleasing to note a real step up in the way many candidates deal with questions 3a) and 3b) AND 8a) and 8b) as centres seem to have responded to the advice given last year on this issue: ie, the answer to the second question making reference to the passage and then giving further evidence from the same author (and other authors if possible) for a wider ranging answer.

I repeat what was stated last year about spelling which is still an issue with a number of candidates: for proper nouns this was generally better but a minority of candidates still use 'gotten' as opposed to 'got' and 'of' instead of 'have'. These and other errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar will be reflected in the mark that is awarded for SPAG.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No. – OPTION 1

1) Generally being done well – the responses reflected a very wide range of understanding of the Aeneas myth.

2a) and 2b) Similarly to last year there were some very good answers but there are candidates who are not using the details in the passage (some quotation) to address the question – ie. not realising that this is a comprehension exercise. These are clearly identified in the mark scheme.

2c) Again there are the same issues as with previous years here: a number of candidates are still not quoting from the passage or are failing to access the higher mark levels because answers are not developed beyond just quoting from the passage. A thorough answer requires some reference to the passage – preferably explicit rather than just implicit - and some relevant background/ discussion of the author. For example, a number of answers did not develop the point that Virgil is a poet.

3a) Most candidates are doing very well in drawing details out of the Livy passage and then explaining the significance of these – ie. A01 and A02. However, for A03, much evaluation is still too generic without reference to the passage. The better answers gave an evaluation as reference to various details in the passage was made with a summary of the author's position at the end.

3b) Generally this was done very well – responses were clear about the positive and negative aspects of the reigns of the Tarquins and displayed this knowledge effectively for A01 and A02: however the A03 was more challenging for a number of candidates. Stronger responses that

scored highly looked carefully at why the sources/authors treated these later Kings in this manner and were making secure judgements here: Livy as presenting history in a particular way and Virgil as a writer of epic poetry – both operating within the Augustan context.

4) Candidates knew a great deal about the life and history of Romulus from both Virgil and Livy and thus were able to score highly on A01. However, this knowledge was not always relevant (ie. discussion of the different versions of the origin story) and fully developed into analysing the achievement of the Sabine Treaty – many just recounted the narrative. This needed to be compared with other notable achievements and thus a judgement made. Again it needs to be stated that some candidates incorrectly assumed that Livy was commissioned by Augustus to write his History: it is also doubtful that Virgil was commissioned to write the Aeneid.

5) Generally this essay was done well: most responses were very knowledgeable about the two kings and were able to identify clearly the focus of the question (ie. Numa – religion/ peace compared to Tullus – war/ expansion) so scored highly on A01 and A02. There were some very good analyses of the difficulties in making a judgement on success as they both represented aspects of the Roman 'tradition'. The stronger answers made a persuasive case for Livy manipulating the history of these kings in order to embellish the characteristics of the earlier kings and to emphasise the Roman values required in a foundation story linking to the Augustan context.

Question No. – OPTION 2

6) This was very well done with some really knowledgeable answers – most focusing on weather conditions/ terrain / attacks from hostile tribes.

7a) and 7b) Most responses were able to identify very clearly the choices that Hannibal was giving here and how this impacted upon both Hannibal and his troops.

7c) Many answers made the point about the veracity of direct speech but there were still too many that failed to illustrate this with details taken from the passage. Those that did – with some discussion of Livy more generally – scored highly.

8a) Again a question that was done very well with answers that focused on extracting the germane aspects of the Livy quote and addressing the issue of the power balance very effectively - so some high scores for A01 and A02. There was also some good evaluation (A03).

8b) There were different ways into this questions: some candidates were able to display their knowledge about the year of Zama and the reasons for Hannibal's defeat whilst others combined the short-term with the longer-term bringing in discussion about Italy and Spain. Both approaches are legitimate and were rewarded equally, in line with the levels of response. It was disappointing that whilst analysing the contributions of Fabius Maximus some otherwise very good answers omitted a discussion of Plutarch. This same point is relevant to question 9.

9) This was the most popular of the essay questions on this option and generally was done well. Candidates were able to display their knowledge of Fabius Maximus with detailed evaluation of his tactics/ strategy/ success. The stronger responses were able to put Fabius' actions into a wider context – bringing in a range of other factors to make a judgement in response to the question of his skills as a general and evaluate effectively.

10) There were fewer really convincing responses to this question: the strongest looked at the issue of Hannibal being a 'successful military commander' and analysed the evidence for this: most agreed that he was and his failures can be partially attributed to the actions of the Carthaginian government but also to his own mistakes and to the actions of others (eg. Fabius, Scipio).

A033 Women in Ancient Politics

General Comments:

Cleopatra continues to be the more popular option than Agrippina, and candidates were clearly very engaged with both topics. Some candidates continue to answer the paper in reverse order, leaving little time for the early questions in each option, which can lead to candidates missing out on marks. It also means that they haven't always built up momentum for the essay. Some candidates in both options followed a somewhat confusing order of questions which were not always clearly signposted for the examiners.

Please remind candidates that for the 1 and 6 questions, there need to be TWO distinct parts of the question and one should be more developed, specific details are useful here and knowing chronology is very helpful.

For 2/3/7/8 candidates must refer to the material on the paper. There were still some candidates not doing so. Point/quotation/explanation is always a useful reminder to students, especially for the longer passage questions and the essays. In answering the 3 and 8 questions, it really helps to place the passage within a context, i.e. this passage comes from X part of the biography/history where Y is talking about Z, this helps candidates to ground their responses and link to the question.

For both options there were some issues with candidates not reading the questions carefully and trying to fit pre-learned responses into questions requiring AO3. There are bullet points provided with the essay questions, candidates should use these as a guide to their responses. It was pleasing to see some plans that had clearly taken note of the guidance in these.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

Option 1

1) This question proved problematic for several candidates as they answered this as if it were asking about Cleopatra and Mark Antony. Candidates should be reminded that they must read the question carefully.

2)

a) This was an information filled passage, and to achieve Level 4, they needed to pick out details relating to Cleopatra's death, there were several versions to mention here.

b) Many candidates were able to pick out two pieces of information here and explain how they related to Cleopatra's death. Please remind candidates that for these questions they must refer to the passage on the paper

c) This proved problematic for some candidates. The question asked about the 'accuracy' of Plutarch's account, however many discussed 'reliability'. There were also quite a few candidates who thought that it was very accurate, even though there were several accounts of her death. Candidates need to read the question carefully, and go beyond a pre-learned biography of the source writer.

3)

a) Candidates were able to pick out lots of relevant information here, with the better responses using the whole passage and explaining Cleopatra's influence. The strongest responses were able to discuss why Mark Antony would have been different with the Romans

and different with the Egyptians, showing a nuanced understanding of his behaviour. Candidates were still putting in pre-learned 'evaluations' of Plutarch, to access Levels 4/5 they really need to consider what is explicitly accurate/reliable in that particular passage.

b) The strongest candidates answered this question by showing an understanding of where in Plutarch's biography of Mark Antony this comes from, then picking out details and then balancing their discussion with reference to both war and politics. Again, the strongest candidates considered the reliability and accuracy of the passage and wider evidence specifically.

4) Candidates on the whole tackled this very well, giving a range of examples for both Caesar and Antony, the stronger candidates recognised the balance between political and personal relationships, it was heartening to see that romance isn't dead as the majority of candidates who discussed children, Caesarion in particular, believed that this showed that they must have been in love, whereas the strongest responses recognised the political link between Rome and Egypt, which he provided.

5) Weaker responses to this essay tended to give an account of the battle of Actium, and did not consider Cleopatra's achievements beforehand or afterwards. There were some outstanding responses to this question examining her legacy and if that showed that her achievements were not removed.

Option 2

6) This was tackled on the whole very well by candidates and they were able to pick out two different elements of relationships with women. Some candidates went beyond romantic relationships and examined familial relationships as well.

7)

a) This question proved problematic for some candidates, perhaps because they had not examined material culture in detail, even though it is on the specification to be considered like the literary sources. Candidates also had a tendency to focus on Agrippina not Nero, and did not use the translation of the detail on the coin.

b) Again, similarly to 7a, candidates found it hard to comment on what this tells us about Agrippina, however stronger responses answered this well by observing the coin and placing it within a context.

c) There were some very good responses to this question, especially by candidates who had noted it was an aureus (comparisons with the modern £50 note) and those who understood who had minted the coin. However, even stronger answers did not focus on the Agrippina element here.

8)

a) This question was handled well, and candidates were able to pick out a range of information and explain Agrippina's relationship with Claudius here. It was very pleasing to see that candidates were looking for the reliability in terms of would Tacitus have known about private conversations. The strongest candidates covered the whole passage. Some candidates were confused about Messalina in reference to this passage and assumed that she was still alive. It is useful to remind candidates about who dies when, as in this particular unit it can be confusing.

b) The stronger responses used the passage on the paper well to place the 'obstacle' of Britannicus within a context. Weaker responses needed to use the passage more and to also focus on the events leading up to the death of Claudius, rather than during Nero's reign. There did continue to be reliance on the pre-learned passages, and it is helpful for candidates to consider the reliability and usefulness of source writers to particular passages and events.

9) Stronger candidates gave some very balanced responses to this question, showing an understanding of what Claudius did without his wives, there was also a good level of discussion

of the role of freedmen and this allowed candidates to demonstrate a greater level of understanding of Claudius' reign, beyond Agrippina and Messalina's actions. There was a good understanding of the differing approaches of Tacitus and Suetonius, however weaker responses did rely on the standard pre-learned paragraphs.

10) This essay produced some very interesting responses. Weaker answers focussed on the personal relationship between Agrippina and Nero, however stronger responses showed an awareness of her interference in his political life. There were good discussions about the 'five good years' and why there might have been changes after this, looking at the death of Agrippina. Again there were some responses which could not access Levels 4 and 5 at AO3 as their evaluations did not relate directly to the sources which they were discussing.

A034 Controlled Assessment

General Comments:

In the process of moderating this unit we read a lot of scripts, and this has been a particularly enjoyable experience this year owing to the wide range of options chosen, and the high standard of many of the candidates' responses. The vast majority of centres have offered this unit for several years and are now proficient with the marking and also the paperwork.

Candidates were generally fully aware that this unit is focused specifically on sources from the ancient world, and their research was often wide ranging and made use of an extraordinary range of resources including books, websites, DVD's, TV programmes, artefacts in museums and even field trips. On the whole the candidates seemed better prepared for their controlled assessment and there were fewer centres where the candidates had apparently been given little guidance other than being given the question and access to a computer. Centres made good use of the teaching time in the lead up to the research phase to introduce their candidates to the context and how to use sources. However this was not always the case, and some candidates focused their essays on analysing websites or books, rather than ancient sources. Where this is the case, centres have been notified in their Report.

Marking was generally accurate, making appropriate use of the mark scheme, although some centres have been reminded of the criteria that has to be met to achieve 'Thorough' as they tended to over-credit basic evaluation. Centres should remind their candidates that analysis and evaluation of a source goes further than simply commenting on the source's reliability. Also candidates should be encouraged to analyse sources in order to explain how they help to answer the question as set, rather than just commenting on the source and how 'reliable' it is. In other words, think of what a source from the ancient world does tell us about the past, rather than what it doesn't. The vast majority of centres whose marks were adjusted by the moderators had over credited AO3.

Most centres annotate the work with 'AO1', 'AO2' and 'AO3' to indicate clearly on each script where credit has been awarded – centres that do not yet do this are encouraged to take up this practice. Cover notes were generally very helpful, and demonstrated that the teachers knew their candidates well, but there were still one or two centres which left them blank. These sheets are an essential tool for the moderators so it is frustrating when they have not been completed. Paperwork was for the most part completed very efficiently, with only one or two exceptions. Almost all centres sent in their samples on time. A few centres sent in scripts with redundant cover sheets from old specifications which had been signed by the candidates – these are not needed. Almost all centres sent in their MS1's and CCS160's quickly and efficiently, and the Moderators only had to contact a handful of schools to request paperwork.

Please note that there is no need to send in students' notes, folders or exercise books unless specifically requested to by the moderator – these should be kept safe at the centre until after the awarding process is completed. Scripts should come bound by a treasury tag, or stapled, and there is no need for those A4 plastic wallets – the moderators have a lot of scripts to go through, and these wallets can become irksome.

Some candidates went over the 2,000 word limit. By doing this they impact on their AO1 mark, and this should always be taken into consideration by the marker at the centre.

All scripts should come with a word count, and all scripts should be clearly labelled with the candidates' name, centre number and exam number. Bibliographies are not essential, but they are good practice and are often seen in the higher end scripts. Where sources and pictures are referred to they should be included in the main body of the essay if possible please. Some scripts referred to sources that the moderators could not find.

The moderators were really pleased to see that so many options had been selected by centres, especially the more obscure ones such as the Minoans and the Celts. Overall the work was an absolute pleasure to read as it was evident that the candidates had, on the whole, been well taught, well prepared, and had access to a wide range of resources.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Option 1: Ancient Egypt 3000-1000 BC

1. Please note the dates for the Egypt option. Several centres allowed their candidates to use sources from outside the date range, in particular, Herodotus. Egypt remains the most popular option this year. Too many candidates answered this question by giving a narrative account of the rule of a specific pharaoh. These centres tended to gloss over the first part of the question which asks the candidate to focus on the sources.

2. Although many centres coped with this question well, moderators read some descriptive accounts of mummification, based on Herodotus (who comes outside the prescribed date range). As with Q1 there was a tendency to describe Egyptian religion (using websites), but not really come to grips with what the sources tell us.

Option 2: Ancient Crete Minoan civilization 2000-1400 BC

3. It is always good to see Crete crop up from time to time in the samples we receive.

4. Centres that answered this question clearly had access to a good range of resources that the candidates could access. It was pleasing to see the candidates being so enthused by this topic.

Option 3: Troy and the Mycenaeans 1450-1100 BC

5. NONE SEEN

6. Candidates offering this question generally produced beautifully illustrated scripts where various Mycenaean artworks were used to glean information about society. The lion hunt dagger was a popular source, as was the 'mask of Agamemnon' and we also saw the usual collection of seals and pots. This was a generally well-answered question, perhaps because candidates were less tempted to just produce a narrative. Some candidates had their sources separate from their essays, in an appendix, this was acceptable but it would have been clearer if the sources were part of the text.

Option 4: Ancient Persia 630-499 BC

7. Please note the dates for the Persia option. Several centres allowed their candidates to use sources from outside the date range referring to the actions of Xerxes, in particular his bridges over the Hellespont. There was a tendency for some candidates to slip into a descriptive account of various Persian technologies, rather than focus on the sources, as requested.

8. As with Q6 this task automatically led the candidates towards the sources, and so was perhaps a better choice for weaker candidates who would be less tempted to stray away from the sources. Some excellent scripts were seen which made clear and accurate deductions from various artworks to reach sensible conclusions about Persian society.

Option 5: The Hellenistic world 323-133 BC

9. The Hellenistic monarchs question was surprisingly popular, and made very interesting reading for the moderators. Besides the more obvious choices such as Ptolemy and Mithradates

other less obvious choices were made including Ptolemy II, Seleucus Nicator and Antiochus IV. Sources were generally used very well in this option.

10. Only a small number of centres chose this question. Those that did so tended to answer with confidence and often in a manner that would put a Sixth form student to shame.

Option 6: The Celts c.500 BC-AD 500

11. A range of Celtic societies were selected by different centres. Some candidates found the limited source evidence quite demanding and gravitated towards basic evaluation of Roman sources (mainly Tacitus) rather than answering the question as set.

12. All sorts of pictorial sources cropped up here, ranging from the Gundestrup cauldron to the Battersea shield, and they were generally used well by the candidates. However, some were distracted by websites that they used for research and wrote rather descriptive accounts of their chosen society rather than focusing on the sources, and what they tell us. On the other hand, this question produced some excellent personal responses where candidates reached their own independent conclusions about the messages we can learn from Celtic art.

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