

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

H408

For first teaching in 2017

H408/33 Summer 2022 series

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers are also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

Advance Information for Summer 2022 assessments

To support student revision, advance information was published about the focus of exams for Summer 2022 assessments. Advance information was available for most GCSE, AS and A Level subjects, Core Maths, FSMQ, and Cambridge Nationals Information Technologies. You can find more information on our [website](#).

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Paper 33 series overview

H408/33, Politics of the Late Republic, is one of four available components in OCR's A Level Classical Civilisation Component Group 3: Beliefs and Ideas.

The examination aims to assess candidates' knowledge and understanding of, and engagement with, classical literature and ideas about principle and pragmatism in the politics of Rome in the 1st century BC.

Candidates who did well in this paper were those who were able to make mature judgements, based on sound factual knowledge, about the political careers of Cicero, Cato, Pompey, Caesar and others, and the parts they played in the events of the 1st century BC.

Generally, candidates were well prepared to discuss Cicero's relationship with Caesar and other members of the first triumvirate, and his prosecution of Verres. Candidates' understanding of the precise nature of *concordia ordinum* was not as well evidenced.

To do well in the extended responses, candidates need to demonstrate detailed knowledge in their insightful discussion of the issues raised by the questions

It should be noted that while this examination is not designed specifically to test candidates' recall of events and their dates, nevertheless, when discussing matters such as individuals' political relationships, causes and consequences are seldom sensibly discussed without due observance of correct chronology.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> displayed detailed and accurate knowledge of events, and their causes and consequences, at Rome in the 1st century BC displayed detailed and accurate knowledge of the prescribed literary sources responded to all aspects of each question attempted selected appropriate material as evidence in support of reasoned argument made appropriate use of secondary scholarship drew reasoned and convincing conclusions in response to questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> displayed limited knowledge of events, and their causes and consequences, at Rome in the 1st century BC displayed limited knowledge of the prescribed literary sources omitted or misunderstood some aspects of some questions made little reference to or use of secondary scholarship presented a narrative account of events with little engagement or analysis in response to questions requiring discussion presented a generally discursive response with little basis in accurate factual knowledge or evidence on which they based their ideas and conclusions.

Section A overview

Section A consists of

- 5 marks' worth of fact- and knowledge-based questions, concerning Cicero's immediate reaction to the assassination of Julius Caesar, and his legal prosecution *in Verrem*;
- two short extended writing questions, worth 10 marks each, in response to a passage from Cicero's letter to Atticus from Lanuvium, and a stimulus sentence about the real force of his speech against Verres;
- a longer discussion (20 marks) of the social and political values of Roman politicians – in this case, Cicero and Caesar.

Question 1

Source A

Cicero's letter to Atticus from Lanuvium, 10th April 44 BC Att. 14.4

1 Why was Cicero at Lanuvium?

[1]

Most candidates knew, or were able to deduce from the date supplied (and, indeed, from the content of the text), that Cicero had fled Rome in the interests of his personal safety in the wake of Caesar's assassination.

Assessment for learning



This question might serve as a useful reminder to centres and candidates that not only the content, but also the context, of the literary sources is important for a full understanding of the political events of the first century BCE.

Question 2

2 Name **one** person to whom Cicero is referring when he says 'Our heroes' (line 6).

[1]

Any of the known conspirators was a creditworthy response to this question, and examiners were impressed by the number of candidates who took trouble to identify Decimus Junius or Marcus Junius Brutus. After Brutus, Cassius was the most often named, followed by Casca and Trebonius, for 1 mark each.

Question 3

3 Explain how Cicero shows his own desperation in **Source A**.

[10]

Question 3 was generally well answered. Centres and candidates should be aware that marks are given according to level descriptors (published in the mark scheme), which consider both AO1 and AO2 aspects of responses. Answers which quoted from the letter, without proper explanation of how Cicero's words revealed his desperation, were not likely to be credited beyond Level 3. Nor was it enough to quote a phrase from the text, followed by 'this shows that Cicero is desperate.' See Exemplar 1.

Candidates who scored less well in this question (and others) may have done so for a variety of reasons; examiners would like to draw attention to one of these here. It is possible, on occasion, for candidates to develop what seem to be credible arguments, but which are based on faulty premises. For example, in this letter, Cicero's reference to the Ides of March as a 'consolation' is not sarcastic, as several candidates suggested; any further AO2 analysis (for example, that he is driven to sarcasm through desperation) will therefore not be creditworthy. Likewise, there are indeed times – for example when Cicero is serving as provincial governor in Cilicia – when he is desperate to return to Rome; writing from Lanuvium, in wholly different circumstances, Cicero is certainly desperate, but he is not desperate to return to Rome. AO2 development along these lines risks undermining what AO1 credit for knowledge and understanding of the source might otherwise have been available.

Exemplar 1

3)		Cicero's desperation and worry are evident in source A, Cicero feels uninformed and separate from events unfolding in Rome. "I suspect here in Rome you hear news every day", Cicero shows his desperation for information, here he is jealous of Atticus and his proximity to Rome while Cicero feels cut off and helpless. Cicero both starts and ends the letter in this way, "if you have any news send it to me", further reinforcing his desire desperation to know everything that's happening in Rome.
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Exemplar 1 demonstrates the correct level of AO1/AO2 material required. This response went on to make several more equally well-argued points, firmly based in knowledge and understanding of the text; it scored 10/10.

Question 4

Cicero successfully prosecuted Gaius Verres in 70 BC, for corruption during the three years Verres was governor of Sicily.

- 4 In which city did the prosecution of Verres take place? [1]

Examiners had anticipated that not all candidates would know that the trial of Verres took place at Rome; 'Sicily', however, was a response that took some by surprise.

Question 5

- 5 Give **two** reasons why Cicero took on the case to prosecute Verres. [2]

Candidates were aware that Cicero had various reasons for having accepted the Sicilians' invitation to act as prosecutor in their case against Verres. Most of these are listed in the mark scheme, and other valid explanations were credited. It should, however, be noted that examiners required specific motives: 'to raise his profile' was not deemed to be sufficient; 'to raise his profile as a *novus homo*' was not deemed to be correct. It is correct, although, that because he was a *novus homo*, Cicero took on the case in order to raise his profile as a politician.

Question 6

- 6 Explain how Cicero made the trial as much about the Republic as about Verres. [10]

The second of the 10-mark extended responses is always more testing than the first, because candidates must generate for themselves the knowledge and understanding of, in this case, Cicero's speech against Verres, on which to base their arguments and analysis. It is certainly true that Cicero made the trial as much about the Republic as about Verres by 'putting the jury themselves on trial' – but candidates must display their knowledge of what Cicero actually said in the speech whereby he was able to turn the tables in this way. Similarly, candidates are well advised to be able to recite the obstacles placed in Cicero's way by Verres and his 'team', but for AO2 marks, they must then be prepared to explain how this made the trial more about the Republic than about Verres.

Exemplar 2

		Cicero attempts to make the trial about the republic as well as
		Verres by appealing to the judge and the jury that they could
		use this trial to restore the reputation of the law courts in
		Rome and reestablish themselves as anti-bribery. He does this by
		emphasizing that Citizens feel scared to come forward as they know
		they will lose to corrupt governors.

Exemplar 2 shows how a candidate effectively demonstrated both knowledge of part of Cicero's speech (AO1) and analysis of how the passage referred to made the trial about more than merely Verres (AO2).

Assessment for learning



Question 6 asked candidates to explain a proposition, not to weigh up to what extent they agreed with it: candidates were neither expected nor required to suggest that 'on the other hand', the trial was actually in some ways more about Verres than about the Republic.

Question 7*

7* 'Cicero's political ideals meant that he felt only joy at the assassination of Caesar.'

Explain to what extent you agree with this view. Justify your response.

You may use **Source A** as a starting point in your answer.

[20]

Candidates who scored well in this question were those who began with a clear and accurate outline of Cicero's political ideals, explained that these were not shared by Caesar, and thus provided a firm foundation on which to argue that the differences between the two men were such that Cicero was bound to have felt joy at Caesar's assassination, as evidenced in Source A.

Successful candidates then went on to explain that Cicero soon began to feel emotions other than joy, as proven in other letters (to Trebonius and Plancus, for example), and by his actions in relation to Marcus Antonius and Octavian. Some candidates were also able to discuss the longstanding relationship, both personal and political, between Caesar and Cicero in 'flashback', as it were. However, this led candidates with a less firm grip on the chronology of the events of the period to make some rather confusing and, at times, anachronistic or even paradoxical, statements about the feelings aroused in Cicero by the death of Caesar. It is not correct, for example, to suggest that in the late 60s BC Cicero 'wanted Caesar dead as can be shown by the fact that he rejected his offers of *amicitia*'.

Assessment for learning



Examiners would like to draw attention to the importance of properly reading and taking time to consider the question presented on the question paper. Examiners were surprised by how many candidates chose to discuss whether or not Cicero had felt joy only at the assassination of Caesar. This was not the question. It may be true that Cicero felt joy not only at the assassination of Caesar, but also at the defeat of Cataline, or at his return to Rome from exile; also, no doubt, on the occasion of his marriage or the birth of his son. Regrettably, but in all fairness, none of these is relevant to the question asked.

Misconception



Cicero's 'political ideals' are often better known than they are understood. *concordia ordinum* does not mean that everyone should always agree about everything; *cum dignitate otium* means much more than 'leisure with dignity' (which in English is hardly a political ideal at all, let alone a guiding principle). These concepts require special attention and further study.

Section B overview

Section B offered a choice between two topics for discussion, each worth 30 marks.

For AO2 marks in this section, the marking grid refers to 'secondary sources, scholars and/or academic works'. In the first instance, the overall quality of the response determined the level to which it was marked. Thereafter the position within that level was adjusted depending on each candidate's use of modern scholarship and quality of written communication.

Examiners regret to report that quality of written communication has declined. Neologisms and malapropisms abound in candidates' written work. Although Verres might have disagreed, Cicero in fact appeared for the prosecution, not the persecution; we do not say that Brutus was one of Caesar's assassins. These things matter because more than basic argument is unlikely to be persuasively expressed in language that is no more than basic; furthermore, examiners must judge what candidates say, not what they think candidates have been trying to say.

Handwriting is becoming very difficult to decipher in an increasing number of cases. Candidates deserve to have their ideas properly considered, which means that examiners must first be able to read them. Again, examiners must judge what candidates say, not what they think candidates might have been trying to say. Therefore, as a matter of justice, where arrangements can be made to allow candidates to submit work written on word processing equipment, examiners would encourage centres to facilitate this.

Examiners have acknowledged in candidates' responses all references to secondary and/or modern (post-Gibbon) scholarship; they also noted that not all of these necessarily supported the arguments being made by candidates in a meaningful way. Whilst it is probably true to say that at Rome in the first century BC, *amicitia* was a 'weapon of politics' (Syme), for AO2 credit at A Level, examiners will require more than passing allusion such as this.

Examiners are pleased, therefore, to report this year that many candidates did more properly engage with the ideas, rather than the phrases of Scullard, Holland, Marin and others; however, while it was good to see that scholarship was drawn from a wide variety of sources, it must be agreed that not all of these carry an equal weight of authority. Candidates should be aware that examiners are generally familiar with the modern scholarship in their area, and where they encounter new names, examiners will research them.

Question 8*

- 8*** Assess to what extent the attitudes of Cicero and the members of the First Triumvirate were completely incompatible. Justify your response.

[30]

This question was considerably more popular than Question 9: it is clear that many centres rightly regard the triumvirate and its relationship with traditional Roman politicians as one of the central questions of the age.

Effective responses generally followed a pattern of establishing Cicero's political principles, then contrasting these against those of Caesar, Pompey and Crassus. The emergence of the triumvirate was generally well rehearsed and the values it represented and rejected were well understood. What was sometimes missing was its place in the constant inconstancy of Roman politics: the sense of the triumvirate as the organic result of seeds sown, as itself a development that grew and ultimately died over time. However, examiners were pleased that the best responses acknowledged and explored the fact that attitudes between Cicero and the three were not always and everywhere mutually hostile.

Assessment for learning



There is a tendency, when dealing with questions of this nature, for candidates to display an impressive range of accurate knowledge and level of understanding. This is to be encouraged, but candidates and centres should be aware that such material must be presented as evidence for further evaluation and analysis. The annals of the period are not, on their own, sufficient to answer the question of the compatibility of these individuals' personalities and ideas.

Question 9*

- 9*** 'Cato was the real champion of the Optimates, Pompey only used them for his own benefit.'

Assess to what extent you agree with this statement. Justify your response.

[30]

Candidates who answered this question were required to deal with only two major figures; however, successful candidates noticed that there was more to the question than simply nominating the 'real' champion of the Optimates and understood that they were required to deal with Pompey's attitude to the faction throughout his career.

In the same way that Question 8 above brought out a tendency for candidates to present knowledge and understanding at the expense of evaluation and analysis, this question seemed to elicit the opposite: many and varied (and often valid) opinions, too often based on rather vague or non-existent evidence.

Assessment for learning



It is clear that candidates know much more about Pompey and Caesar (and their relationships with Cicero) than about Crassus. OCR recommends centres use a wide range of resources when preparing their candidates for assessment.

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