

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

ANCIENT HISTORY

H407

For first teaching in 2017

H407/11 Summer 2023 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 is 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.

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Paper 11 series overview

Candidates' performance in this option was generally good with few very unsuccessful responses. There was use of a wide range of evidence across the paper. Candidates seemed very familiar with the events of the Peloponnesian War, especially its causes and who, perhaps, was to blame. The essays in the depth study were well answered as candidates were often able to provide detailed references to the sources and put forward compelling and often sophisticated arguments reaching sensible and well thought out conclusions.

There was a greater number of candidates this year who did not give the correct number for the question they were answering, or no number at all when they started a new question which made it more difficult for examiners to award marks without having to make educated guesses as to where answers end and then begin.

There were also many instances of the use of 'agreeable/disagreeable' when discussing whether a candidate agreed with a comment or interpretation.

A significant number of candidates also referred to 'The Great Gap' in Thucydides without any explanation of what that might be, as well as very generic comments such as 'The sources tell us ...' without any mention of which source(s) was/were being referred to.

Like last year, the assessment objectives are heavily weighted towards using, analysing and evaluating ancient source material. Answers which give a broad narrative or offer unsubstantiated statements such as 'the sources show that...' are unlikely to achieve marks in AO3 beyond the lower two bands.

The vast majority of candidates coped well with the time constraints with very few examples seen of candidates running out of time.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • had a secure knowledge of the period studied • had a precise and clear grasp of the chronology • selected sources focused on the specific terms of the question • prioritised the explanation in answer to the terms of the question, using evidence and knowledge in support • evaluated, focused on the reliability of the specific point being made. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attributed an event incorrectly to a person/group • did not focus on the main issue of the question but offered a generalised account of the period • provided a narrative of events, not an analysis • offered generic evaluation.

Section A overview

Overall candidates showed a good understanding of the main events in the two periods required by the essay questions. Successful answers to the essays and the modern interpretation made good use of the evidence to reach convincing conclusions.

The more successful responses stuck to the precise terms of the question; the evaluation of the evidence used was often convincing and pertinent.

Question 1*

- 1* To what extent do the sources support the view that the Spartans always acted only in their own interests in the period 425–404 BC?

You must use and analyse the ancient sources you have studied as well as your own knowledge to support your answer. [30]

Very few candidates attempted this question. Those who did often chose to interpret the question as referring to the behaviour and interests of individual Spartans, e.g. Pausanias, Brasidas, Gylippus, Lysander. Due marks were given to these answers.

Most candidates mentioned Brasidas' Thracian campaign, but several used it as an example of Sparta not acting in their own interest as they were 'liberating' Athenian allies, but failing to mention that the purpose was to gain some negotiating points in order to recover the prisoners from Sphacteria – and the reaction of the Spartan authorities to Brasidas' success.

Most were able to highlight the Peace of Nicias as an instance of Sparta acting in her own interests ignoring the wishes of her own allies.

Some of the most successful responses highlighted Sparta's reaction to Syracuse's request for assistance until persuaded by Alcibiades that it would be in their interests.

Less successful responses did not cover the whole period of 425-404 BC in the question, omitting the Ionian War and the alliance(s) made with the Persians at the expense of the Ionian Greeks.

Exemplar 1

	The sources often lack detail through the period, and there is an unclear picture as to the
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extent to which the allies were consulted on various strategies. However, we are able to ~~get a picture that~~ infer that they were not consulted from their reaction to the peace of Nicias ~~in~~ in 421 BC, as described by Thucydides who wrote "they would not sign the treaty unless fairer terms were produced." This refers to the reactions of Corinth and Thebes, who ~~actual~~ Thucydides tells us desert to Athens because of this. This suggests deep dissatisfaction with the peace, suggesting that the only Peloponnesian state it really benefited was Sparta. Thucydides suggests a reason that Sparta was so eager for peace, "Sparta most of all had reason for peace, since they were still anxious to get back the men from the island." This shows that Sparta's 120 men still dictated their policy on behalf of the allies 6 years later. In addition, Sparta's selfishness is shown by ~~the~~ a clause reported by Thucydides within the peace, "the Athenians would come to the aid of Sparta with all their strength in the case of a slave war." This shows that Sparta's internal strife also affected their decision making on behalf of the allies - however it could also be argued that if Sparta suffered an extreme helot revolt they would be weaker which would disadvantage the allies. But

	either way, Sparta allows her own interest
	to influence her decision making - even against
	the wishes of her most important allies.

The response analyses very well the problems with the sources in assessing the question. It produces high-level evaluation worthy of the top level. The specific question about Spartan self-interest remains the focus of the response as the evaluation, analysis and evidence are all well integrated to reach convincing conclusions about the nature of the evidence in answering this specific question.

Question 2*

- 2* 'It was the unity which the Greeks showed against the Persians between 492 and 479 BC which was the key factor in their victory.'
To what extent do you agree with this view?

You must use and analyse the ancient sources you have studied as well as your own knowledge to support your answer. **[30]**

Evaluation of the sources, tended to centre on Herodotus. Some candidates fell into the trap of generic evaluation without reference to the specific passage referred to, which in fact was a common factor across all questions. Some of this for Herodotus was tautologous giving as a weakness that he did not necessarily believe what he was told, but as a strength that he checked his sources. There was also the common incorrect remark that he was an Athenian (which he wasn't) and so biased.

Many candidates used the Serpent Column to good effect but there was some confusion over what it tells us with several candidates claiming it told us how many men and/or ships each state supplied and that it represented all who contributed throughout the wars rather than just at Plataea. There was also confusion over the exact number of states on the column (31).

As with Question 1, less successful responses did not answer with reference to the whole period mentioned in the question, concentrating only on 480–79. Even among those who did widen their discussion there was very little mention of 492.

There was good discussion of other factors which might have contributed to the victory of the Greeks, but very few came to a conclusion with reference to 'the key factor'. Less successful answers tended not to consider other factors, concentrating just on how united, or not, the Greeks were. In discussing the relatively small number of states on the Serpent Column in relation to the total number of Greek states, very few candidates considered whether some of them actually had a choice.

A common error was to say that Aegina medised; while it is true that they did agree to give Darius earth and water in 491, they are singled out by Herodotus for their contribution at Salamis and are in position 6 on the Serpent Column.

Stronger responses gave credit to the contributions of individuals, including Miltiades at Marathon, and some came to the conclusion that it was the, admittedly limited, unity of the Greeks which gave them the numbers to be able to face the Persians. While there was good discussion of unity or otherwise in 480–79, very few mentioned 490. However, the most successful answers highlighted the lack of unity even among the Eretrians and Athenians in that campaign and the importance of Miltiades' persuasive powers at Marathon, along with some discussion of the famous flashing shield. Only one response made the point that one of the reasons that Xerxes may have fallen for Themistocles' trick was because he was aware that there was dissension within the Greek camp.

Question 3

3 Read the interpretation below.

In so far as anyone can be held *immediately* responsible for the outbreak of the war which did so much to eat away the great achievements of fifth-century Greece, I think it is the Spartans (and their allies, in particular the Corinthians) who must bear the blame. We know from Thucydides (7.18.2–3) that the Spartans themselves later realised they had been at fault in 432–1. It may well be that the Spartans and most of their allies conceived themselves as fighting to stop Athens from further increasing her power or wealth, which might take place at their expense; but this, of course, does not excuse them from breaking the Thirty Years Peace and resorting to war.

5

G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (adapted)

How convincing do you find G.E.M. de Ste. Croix's interpretation of who was responsible for the outbreak of war in 431 BC?

You must use your knowledge of the historical period and the ancient sources you have studied to analyse and evaluate G.E.M. de Ste. Croix's interpretation. **[20]**

There were many successful responses to this question with many attaining Levels 4 and 5. 'In so far as' caused a few problems for some candidates who chose to ignore it and rather interpreted the passage as saying 'anyone' could be held responsible.

Some responses were very short, even from otherwise very good scripts, with candidates apparently concentrating more on the essays, despite this question being worth over 20% of the total marks. Many of these responses only concentrated on the final sentence.

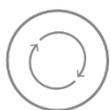
More successful responses discussed some other reasons for the outbreak of the war, including the role of Corinth over Epidamnus/Corcyra and Potidaea (and contrasting it with their intervention over the revolt of Samos), but only a few of the most successful commented on 'immediately', despite it being italicised and the crux of de Ste Croix's argument. A few of the most successful responses made the point that 'immediately' implies that there were other, less immediate causes. Many fell into the trap of simply giving a long narrative of the Pentacontaetia, often ignoring the more recent events after the peace of 446, and 'immediately'.

Some responses sought to lay the blame on Thebes for attacking Plataea, ignoring the fact that Sparta had already given Athens its final ultimatum which Athens had refused to agree to. Many also brought in the Megarian Decree, but fewer commented on why the Spartans chose to concentrate particularly on it in their second embassy.

Others sought to blame Athens for the war, citing her aggressive imperialism, ignoring De Ste Croix's comment that it was Sparta who broke the treaty and his comment that they would be fighting 'to stop Athens from further increasing...'. This would have been a good opportunity to bring in Thucydides' immediate and underlying causes, but very few candidates did.

Among less successful responses there was a fairly common idea that Sparta offered arbitration but Athens refused, or that the Spartans had even asked for peace among their embassies. What Athens did was to refuse to accede to the Spartans' increasingly provocative and aggressive demands, and indeed Pericles suggested that Athens should offer to go to arbitration. There were also several responses which gave the wrong year for the outbreak of the war, despite it being in the question, and some also included events from after the outbreak of the war.

Assessment for learning



There was a trend from many candidates in Question 3 that they apparently thought they should automatically disagree with the interpretation. The passages chosen for these questions normally come from well-respected authors, and candidates would be better advised to consider *why* the author might have come to the conclusion they did. They should also avoid being over-critical, especially about what they perceive as omissions. These are very short passages from often very long books. One such comment was that the writer 'struggles to convince me that he has understood the reasons for the war'. A more successful approach would be along the lines of 'other points not included in the interpretation are'.

Section B overview

Many responses to Question 4 focused only on the passage and so reached less than convincing conclusions on its utility. Evaluation of the sources was often good in Question 5 and Question 6, although there is still a tendency from some candidates to copy out some standard phrases about each source at the end of each question, frequently exactly the same paragraph(s), rather than assessing the reliability of the actual passage they have used as evidence. However, there is the danger shown by some candidates who did try to this merely to repeat the same sentence after every use of the same author. The aim should be to attempt some evaluation of the passage in context.

Question 4

4 Read the passage below.

<p>'But at the present time, as we have just pointed out to you, your whole way of life is out of date... Your inactivity has done harm enough. Now let there be an end of it. Give your allies, and especially Potidaea, the help you promised, and invade Attica at once. Do not let your friends and kinsmen fall into the hands of the bitter enemies. Do not force the rest of us [the Corinthians] in despair to join a different alliance. If we did so, no one could rightly blame us – neither the gods who witnessed our oaths nor any man capable of appreciating our situation. The people who break a treaty of alliance are the ones who fail to give the help they swore to give, not those who have to look elsewhere because they have been left in the lurch. But if you will only make up your minds to act, we will stand by you. It would be an unnatural thing for us to make a change, nor could we find other allies with whom we have such close bonds. You have heard what we have to say. Think carefully over your decision. From your fathers was handed down to you the leadership of the Peloponnese. Maintain its greatness.'</p>	<p>5</p> <p>10</p>
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Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.71

How useful is this passage for our understanding of the relationship between Sparta and Corinth?

[12]

The overall profile of responses to this question was not as good as for other questions, and was often regarded as the least important question with some candidates offering no response. Some were very brief, even from otherwise very good candidates, and without references to sources outside the passage, and some even with none from the passage itself. Very few concentrated on 'how useful', which really demands comparison with other sources for good evaluation.

Very many candidates said that this passage was unreliable as evidence as Thucydides was an Athenian and therefore could not have known what was said at this 'private meeting'. However, in the very next chapter he tells us that there were Athenians present who then went on to address the Spartan Assembly. Admittedly this chapter is not in the prescription, but any evaluation of the given passage should take this information into account. Those candidates who were aware of this were given due marks.

More successful candidates were able to give the context of the passage (the debate at Sparta in 432), which is always to be recommended as a starting point for discussing any passage.

Few candidates addressed the nub of the question – that Corinth could influence the decisions Sparta made, and why (because Sparta needed the strength of the Peloponnesian League to maintain her position, especially with regard to the helots, and so could not afford to lose such a power as Corinth, particularly with a war looming with the naval power of Athens). Those that did were able also to mention their intervention in 440 over Samos, and some also mentioned her reaction after the Peace of Nicias and her alliance with Argos, as well as the bicameral nature of the Peloponnesian League. It was remarkable how few candidates mentioned that Sparta was the leader of this league of which Corinth was a member.

The reference to Potidaea and what help Sparta had offered and why, was not picked up by all candidates.

Some candidates gave as evidence of Corinth's 'close bonds' with Sparta that they fought on Sparta's side at Mantinea (Corinth was unable to respond to Sparta's request for help).

Exemplar 2

	This passage of Thucydides shows part of the Corinthian complaint
	in 432 BC when the Peloponnesian League and Athens met to
	discuss discuss war and their issues. We must be sceptical of this
	speech as Thucydides is known for adding his own elements due to
	lack of memory however due to this congress being attended by
	many other polis it makes it seem more reliable as more people
	would have the witnessed it and written elements down. This
	speech clearly limits the negatives of a Sparta's and Corinth's
	relationship due to this being a complaint speech however it
	does suggest through the quote "do not join the the rest of us
	in despair to join a different alliance" which clearly depicts the
	close ties they have and they don't really want to leave - they
	simply want that Sparta to take a more active part in war.
	Thucydides was writing at the time, making him contemporary, meaning
	he would have seen Sparta and Corinth's relationship in action
	however this allows room for the Sparta mirage, which was
	the distorted and warped view of Sparta other Greek states had,

	and by Thucydides being Athenian, he would have played into it.
	This can be shown through the quote "your fathers was handed down to you the leadership of the Peloponnese. Maintain its greatness" this here Thucydides is referencing the battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC when Sparta won their reputation of not being
	treasants and to never giving up (Herodotus - tight hand a teeth).
	However, personally, I think this source shows more of Spartan attitudes and ideologies than their relationship with Corinth in particular, for example "your whole way of life is out of date" this is clearly referencing the conservative and traditional ways that ruled Sparta until the later 5th century rather than the relationship of the alliance. Thucydides was writing with a narrative of Spartan
	war in mind, which would tailor his accounts to make events and portray an example of this in the passage is "your inactivity has done harm enough" clearly showing the war and reluctance of Sparta Thucydides enjoys. Lastly, a way in which the Corinthian and Spartan relationship is shown is through the quote "it would be unnatural for us to make a change" this is because Corinth had been allies with Sparta since 580 BC when they expelled the Corinthian tyrants, which shows a clear long and trusting relationship.

Overall, this response is focused on the utility of the passage. The passage is mined well for support and there is convincing evaluation of Thucydides. The entire response is analytical in reaching convincing conclusions and interprets the source very well.

Question 5*

5* 'The helot population restricted the Spartans both at home and abroad.'

How far do the sources support this view?

You must use and analyse the ancient sources you have studied as well as your own knowledge to support your answer. [36]

This was the more popular of the two option questions in Section B, with the majority of candidates answering it. There was a good range of responses ranging from some less successful to the very top of the range; the majority of responses were in Levels 4-6.

Many candidates mentioned helots part in military campaigns as a positive contribution and therefore not a restriction, especially with Brasidas, and Plataea was also often mentioned in this context, but very few responses thought about why there were so many (35,000) at the battle, or indeed only 5,000 Spartans, a mere 60% of the numbers of Spartans Demaratus claims. Several candidates also used these figures to claim that the helots outnumbered the Spartans 7:1, ignoring the fact that there might have been other helots left behind, presumably guarded by the 3,000 Spartans who did not go to the battle, if Demaratus' numbers are to be taken as accurate.

In discussing the helot threat several candidates mentioned the clause in the 421 treaty with Athens requiring Athens to come to Sparta's aid in the event of a helot uprising, but wrongly ascribed it to the Peace of Nicias rather than the subsequent 50 Year alliance. In considering other possible factors which may have limited the Spartans many candidates referred to *oliganthropia*, but very rarely with any explanation; a good general rule is to assume the examiner knows nothing and so everything must be explained!

Some less successful responses concentrated only on the Spartan constitution and ignored the effects of the helots on Spartan policy abroad, or even got side-tracked into merely discussing the whole Spartan constitution without any real reference to the helots or Spartan policy.

Most candidates mentioned the helot contribution to farming and other domestic chores and the helot revolt of 464, with reference to the sources, and there were some good discussions of the *krypteia* with more successful candidates making the point that, if the accounts were true, the Spartans themselves certainly felt the helots were a potential problem.

Candidates were able to cite a good range of sources, including Kritias and Myron of Priene on the treatment of the helots, with some using sources from the Section A prescription to support points; this was given due marks. Evaluation was generally still pretty generic rather than specific to the precise passage cited. Some of the best examples were in discussion of the various sources' discussion of the *krypteia*. There were a couple of candidates who stated that Plutarch was from the school of Aristotle.

Question 6*

- 6* To what extent do you agree with Xenophon that the Spartans failed to live up to the values set by Lycurgus?

You must use and analyse the ancient sources you have studied as well as your own knowledge to support your answer. **[36]**

This was the less popular option, with fewer candidates answering. There was a fair range of responses but with very few less successful answers. A significant number were in Levels 5 and 6.

Only the most successful candidates were able to place the reference to Xenophon within the context of chapter 14 of the *Constitution of the Spartans*, namely the effect of foreign service on Spartan values, especially the desire to harbour wealth. Many of these candidates were also able to go on to discuss examples ranging from Pausanias through to Brasidas and Lysander. This is a good point as most of the rest of Xenophon's work is describing the Spartan way of life as supposedly prescribed by Lycurgus.

Less successful candidates fell into the trap of just describing the Spartan way of life, often with a huge emphasis on the *agoge*, without real reference to the question. Almost all candidates mentioned the Spartan surrender on Sphacteria as an example of values not being upheld, often contrasting it with Thermopylae.

A good range of sources was used with less successful responses tending to use Plutarch and Xenophon predominantly. Evaluation tended towards the generic and few were able to place Xenophon's comment in relation to the context of the examples they gave. A common comment was that Xenophon lived in Sparta. He probably did, but briefly, before being given land near Olympia where he became the Spartan *proxenos*. He was forced to leave in 371 and moved to Corinth.

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