

AS LEVEL

Examiners' report

ANCIENT HISTORY

H007

For first teaching in 2017

H007/01 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.

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Paper 1 series overview

Examiners commented on a very successful standard of engagement with the questions. The questions tested a wide range of the specification with pleasing responses seen across this year's candidature.

There was more evidence this year of candidates using ancient source material to support their arguments in Questions 3 and 4, and evaluation was certainly much more convincing than in 2019 and 2022.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<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 • provided evaluation 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

Question 1 requires no extra support from sources; a simple factual response to the issue which then goes on to make convincing judgements is all that is required. The central issues are wide enough for all candidates to score highly even by approaching the question in different ways. Question 2 asks the candidates to extract relevant support from the passages on the question paper and to use supporting evidence from other relevant sources to address the question posed.

Question 1

1 How far did the Sicilian Expedition damage Athens' ability to win the Peloponnesian war? **[10]**

There were a considerable number of very successful answers to this question. The Sicilian expedition and its aftermath seemed very well known to candidates.

Most candidates wrote around a page to a page and a half making a good use of time for the marks available. There were a number of answers which focused on the narrative of the Sicilian expedition and its prelude which is not strictly asked for in the question.

The more successful responses looked at short-term and long-term effects of Athens' disastrous loss in Sicily. These often included lack of men, destruction of ships, defection of allies and economic issues. The most successful answers did note that it took another 9 years for Athens to be defeated, and this only after Sparta received Persian financial support.

Exemplar 1

The Sicilian Expedition damaged Athens' ability to win by depleting its resources, bringing Syracuse into the war, and being a cause of the tyranny of the 400. ~~the~~ -

The most significant way that the Sicilian expedition damaged Athens' ability to win the war was that it was a waste of resources. Over 200 ships were directly destroyed during the war which was a huge hit to the Athenian navy. At least 7000 men of fighting age were imprisoned in the quarries. These were significant proportions of the Athenian resources. As these resources as well as the government focus were spent reinforcing Athens' position in the Aegean, they would have had a better chance at winning the war.

The attack on Syracuse brought Syracuse into the war on the Spartan side. Syracuse was the largest and wealthiest city in the Greek world so was a powerful ally for Sparta. Additionally Syracuse was key for its naval resources as it allowed Sparta to build up the navy that fought in the Ionian war. This loss of its total naval supremacy damaged Athens' ability to win the Peloponnesian war significantly.

A final factor is that the failure of

Athens' democracy in its role in the Sicilian Expedition was a major failure that allowed aristocratic forces a point to crystallize their opposition on. This level of government instability severely hampered Athens' ability to take advantage of its naval victories in the Ionian wars. The Sicilian expedition severely damaged Athens' ability to win the Peloponnesian war. It perhaps could have recovered its position but was not able to because of government instability that was a partial result of the expedition. The whole expedition was an unforced blunder -

This is a response that received full marks. The factual information is accurate and detailed, and fully relevant to the question. The answer focuses on the aftermath of the Sicilian expedition and assesses possible factors as to why Athens failed to win the war based on their losses in Sicily.

Question 2

2 Read the following passages.

Darius the king says: 'When Ahura Mazda saw this earth in commotion, he thereafter bestowed it upon me, he made me king. I am king. By the favour of Ahura Mazda I subdued it; they did what I said, as was my desire. If now you should think "How many are the countries which Darius the king held?", look at the sculptures of those who bear the throne, then you will know. Then it will become known to you: the spear of a Persian man has gone far. Then shall it become known to you: a Persian man has given battle far indeed from Persia.'

5

Naqs-e Rostam inscription, No. 1 section 4

I am Xerxes, the Great King, king of kings, king of lands containing many men, king of this great earth far and wide, son of Darius the king, an Achaemenid. Xerxes the king says: 'By the favour of Ahura Mazda, I built this Gate of All Lands. Much other good (construction) was built within this (city of) Parsa, which I built and which my father built. Whatever good construction is seen, we built all that by the grace of Ahura Mazda.'

5

Xerxes' inscription from Persepolis, sections 2–3

On the basis of these passages and other sources you have studied, to what extent was the individual ambition of the Persian Kings a factor in their decisions to attack Greece?

[20]

The two passages were utilised successfully by most candidates to discuss the ambitions of Darius and Xerxes in invading Greece. There was some good understanding of the usefulness of inscriptions as well as their limitations. The more successful answers focused on Persian propaganda in the passages cited as well as factors such as personal revenge. Some answers focused only on the passages without using other sources to support or refute the inscriptions. The evaluation was often basic, especially regarding support from Herodotus.

Section B overview

Most answers to the essay questions reached sensible conclusions derived from the ancient evidence. Evaluation of the sources must be specific to the point being made. There was still generic evaluation bolted on at the end of an essay.

Question 4 was slightly more popular than Question 3.

Question 3*

- 3*** To what extent was the attitude of the Spartans towards the Athenians between 479–445 BC always one of aggression?

You must use and analyse the ancient sources you have studied as well as supporting your answer with your own knowledge.

[30]

The more successful answers to this question stuck strictly to the timeline. There were many occasions where information was used outside of 479 to 445 BC and this received limited or no marks. No set answer is anticipated with candidates arguing for and against the motion. There was some good use and evaluation of Thucydides but other authors were used sparingly. Evaluation of Thucydides focused on his research methods, him being an Athenian and other biographical details such as his generalship and relationship with Pericles.

Candidates often cited Athens' aggression rather than Sparta's, including the building of the long walls on the establishment of the Athenian empire. More successful answers discussed the battle of Tanagra and the invasion under Pleistoanax in 446. Most answers could recall details of the 30 Years' Peace treaty with varying degrees of accuracy and detail.

Exemplar 2

Further proof the Spartans showed little aggression to Athens in 479-445BC is that after the Battle of Tanagra in 457BC, Sparta returned to the Isthmus according to Thucydides. At the Battle of Tanagra, the Spartans ~~defeated the Athenians~~ attempted to avoid the battle initially by going through Boeotia instead of the Corinthian Gulf ~~there~~ where the Athenians were waiting, showing how they wanted to avoid ~~war~~ in outright conflict with Athens. However, the Athenians followed them and attacked but were defeated, giving the Spartans the opportunity to march on to Attica and Athens; however, they turned around and returned to Sparta. This shows a clear lack of aggression from Sparta and instead an avoidance of conflict. This could be the Spartans sticking to their typical isolationist policy or, due to the heavy casualties on both sides, the realisation that to march on Athens would have massive consequences for both sides. ~~Some sources, such as Plutarch, speculate~~

A very relevant piece of evidence directly related to the question. The battle of Tanagra is made relevant using detailed factual knowledge supported by source material. Sensible conclusions are reached based on the evidence. The style is analytical and focused on the question.

Question 4*

- 4* 'The Archidamian War 431–421 BC with Sparta would have been concluded more quickly and successfully for the Athenians had Pericles not died of the Plague.'

To what extent do you agree with this view?

You must use and analyse the ancient sources you have studied as well as supporting your answer with your own knowledge.

[30]

There was some good engagement with this question. Most candidates knew to stop at the Peace of Nikias but there were a large number of answers which attributed the abandonment of the Periclean strategy as why the Athenians lost the war in 404 as a direct cause showing no understanding of the Ionian War, the Sicilian expedition or Persian involvement.

Most answers could recall with detail the events of 431 to 429 and there was good understanding of what Pericles' strategy was.

Candidates regularly used detail from the Pylos/Sphacteria episode as well as Brasidas' campaigns to either support or refute the claim in the question. There were many occasions although where candidates offered a simple narrative of the first half of the Peloponnesian war without engaging with the precise terms in the question.

Analysis was good and evaluation often focused on Thucydides' reliability.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should be aware that ancient history essays often have a very wide scope. It can appear that candidates seek to put in almost everything that they think is relevant and often at the detriment of a lack of incisive analysis.

Candidates should go deeper rather than wider. Examiners much prefer to see fewer arguments but more depth and insight. Examiners mark the quality of the analysis and support from the sources; they do not penalise if certain details are missed out. Therefore, candidates should feel confident that so long as their arguments and supporting evidence are relevant to the question then they can get marks in the highest levels.

Copyright information

Question 2 - © LACTOR 16: The Persian Empire from Cyrus II to Artaxerxes I, Cambridge University Press.

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