

**A LEVEL**

**Examiners' report**

# **CLASSICAL CIVILISATION**

**H408**

For first teaching in 2017

**H408/33 Summer 2024 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 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 BCE.

To do well in the extended responses, candidates are required to deploy detailed knowledge in the service of insightful discussion of the issues raised by the questions.

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 BCE.

Generally, candidates were well prepared to suggest reasons for the emergence of the first triumvirate, the extent to which Cicero defended the Republic, the risks to it posed by corrupt magistrates like Verres, and the importance of ambition to 'success' at Rome in the first century BCE.

It should be noted that while this examination is not designed to test candidates' mere recall of events and their dates, nevertheless, when discussing matters such as Cicero's opposition to Caesar, or any given politician's career trajectory (successful or not), causes and consequences are rarely 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"> <li>displayed detailed and accurate knowledge of events, their causes and consequences, at Rome in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE</li> <li>displayed detailed and accurate knowledge of the prescribed literary sources</li> <li>responded to all aspects of each question attempted</li> <li>selected appropriate material as evidence in support of reasoned argument</li> <li>made appropriate use of secondary scholarship</li> <li>drew reasoned and convincing conclusions in response to questions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>displayed limited knowledge of events, their causes and consequences, at Rome in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE</li> <li>displayed limited knowledge of the prescribed literary sources</li> <li>omitted or misunderstood some aspects of some questions</li> <li>made little or no reference to or use of secondary scholarship</li> <li>presented a narrative account of events with little engagement or analysis in response to questions that required discussion OR</li> <li>presented a generally discursive response with little basis in accurate factual knowledge from which conclusions were reasonably drawn.</li> </ul>

## Section A overview

Section A consisted of:

- 5 single marks' worth of fact- and knowledge-based questions, concerning Cicero's letter of 43 BCE to Trebonius, and the first triumvirate.
- two short extended writing questions, worth 10 marks each, in response to a passage from Cicero's letter of 43 BCE to Trebonius, and a stimulus sentence about the first triumvirate.
- a longer discussion (20 mark) of actions and ideas of Roman politicians, in this case, Cicero's defence of the Republic.

### Source A

**Cicero's letter from Rome, c. 2nd February 43 BC, *Fam.* 10.28**

How I would have liked you to have invited me to that most beautiful feast on the Ides of March! We should have had nothing remaining. But with matters as they are, the heavenly service you have given to the republic is qualified by some grumbling. Truly, the fact that this curse of the country was taken out of the way by you – the most loyal of men – and thanks to your generosity, is still alive, makes me a little angry with you at times (although it is hardly right!). Since you have left more trouble for me with to deal with by myself, than for the rest of the world put together!

5

For as soon as the Senate could be held freely after the most dishonourable departure of Antony, I resumed my old spirit, which you and that most patriotic citizen, your father, have always praised and loved. For, when the tribune of the plebs had summoned the senate on the 20th of December and were putting another question to the house, I reviewed the whole constitutional situation and spoke with intense spirit rather than eloquence. I restored to the weary, wilting senate its ancient and traditional valour. That day, my intense pleading gave the Roman people hope of recovering their freedom. From that time, I have devoted every moment not only to thinking about the Republic, but being active in it.

10

15

### Question 1

1 Who is the recipient of this letter?

[1]

The vast majority of candidates were able correctly to identify Trebonius here.

### Question 2

2 What does the 'most beautiful feast' in line 1 refer to?

[1]

The 'feast' to which Cicero is referring here is the metaphorical one of Caesar's assassination. Candidates who made it explicit that they thought that real food was involved lost the mark.

## Question 3

- 3 Explain how successfully Cicero shows his enthusiasm for the events he is referring to in Source A.

[10]

Question 3 was generally well done. Centres and candidates were aware that marks were given according to both AO1 and AO2 aspects of responses. Responses which merely quoted from the passage, without proper explanation of how Cicero's words worked to convey enthusiasm were not likely to be rewarded beyond Level 3. Nor was it enough merely to quote a phrase from the text, followed by the magic words, 'this shows Cicero's enthusiasm'. It should also be noted that candidates were not required to discuss other shades of Cicero's mood.

### Exemplar 1

3	Cicero shows his enthusiasm with "How I would have liked you to have invited me". Here Cicero shows his desire to have participated in the assassination of Caesar, wanting & desperately to be part of <del>the</del> this glorious removal of tyranny.
	Cicero shows his enthusiasm <del>with</del> when describing the assassination as "that most beautiful feast". Here Cicero <del>per</del> & portrays the assassination as a joyous public occasion, something that would only cause joy and celebration, thus showing his enthusiasm.

Exemplar 1 demonstrates the correct level of AO1/AO2 response required. This response went on to make several more equally well-argued points, firmly based on sound knowledge of (demonstrated by accurate quotation from) and understanding of the text.

## Question 4

Caesar and Pompey formed an alliance in 60 BC.

- 4 What is the name given to this political alliance?

[1]

This political alliance is known as the first triumvirate, although 'triumvirate' alone was enough to gain the mark. 'Second' (or indeed 'third') triumvirate was deemed incorrect. 'Amicitia' was not accepted: the triumvirate was certainly one example of *amicitia*; and indeed *amicitia* is, in a sense, a 'name' given to such an alliance, but not specifically to this alliance.

## Question 5

5 Name **one** other member of this alliance.

[1]

The cohort knew that Crassus was the third man.

## Question 6

6 State **one** political office which Pompey held during his lifetime.

[1]

Most candidates knew that during his lifetime, Pompey had held the office of consul. In spite of his *propraetorial imperium*, Pompey never held the office of *praetor*.

## Question 7

7 Explain why Caesar and Pompey wished to form this alliance.

[10]

The second of the 10-mark extended responses is always more challenging than the first. Candidates must generate for themselves the AO1 knowledge and understanding of, in this case, the first triumvirate, on which to base their AO2 analysis of how and why it came into being. In this case, candidates were required – and, generally, were able – both to recall what Caesar and Pompey wanted, and to explain how each thought that working with the other (and Crassus) would help him achieve these aims.

## Question 8\*

8\* 'Cicero always strongly opposed individuals who he thought were a threat to the *res publica*.'

Assess to what extent you agree with this opinion by discussing Cicero's relationship with Caesar and Catiline.

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

[20]

The best responses to this question were those that clearly demonstrated detailed knowledge (for AO1) of those moments at which the career of Cicero crossed with those of **both** Catiline **and** Caesar. For AO2 marks, this knowledge was used as evidence in support of arguments around **both** the strength **and** the consistency of Cicero's opposition to these two 'threats' to the Republic. Discussion of the extent to which they really did threaten the Republic, and how they did so, was also rewarded.

Candidates who failed to observe the rubric here often cost themselves AO1 marks: it was important to discuss Cicero's relationship with Caesar and Catiline, as directed by the question. Discussion of Verres and/or Antony (etc) was not prohibited, if such discussion helped further a candidate's argument, but the omission of either Caesar or Catiline (or, yes, both) meant that some candidates may have failed to do themselves justice.

### Assessment for learning: the importance of planning



It is important, in the extended response questions, that candidates take time to think before they write, whether or not they choose to make out a formal essay plan. Exemplar 2 below highlights part of a response to Question 8 which is marred by what feels to the reader like a somewhat 'scatter-gun' approach. The candidate does display some accurate knowledge and is attempting to use it to show that Cicero's opposition to Caesar was not wholly consistent. But the candidate's argument is badly hampered by a failure to link ideas according to any obvious rationale. Taking events in their correct chronological order may have helped. If the candidate had stopped to think before starting to write, a more effective argument could have been built.

### Exemplar 2

		However, during the civil war, before Pompey's
		defeat, there were points where Cicero was
		hesitant to pick sides as well as of what
		actions to take for the sake of the Republic
		and of Rome. This is shown in some of his
		letters, (some to Atticus) of asking of him of
		what actions to take in the face of this
		takeover, that when Caesar had taken
		over the Senate, what was he to do. In
		addition, he became highly critical of
		Pompey's actions as well, of his running away
		and fleeing out of Caesar's reach, for now.



		<p><del>Furthermore</del>, whilst, Cicero didn't hold Caesar in a high regard, or have any care for him, as shown in Source A of his response to the Ides of March, Caesar granted Cicero Clemency, and had tried to reach out to him multiple times to join him and his alliances. This shows that whilst Caesar didn't mind Cicero, and kept trying to get him as an ally, Cicero stuck to his beliefs and continued to strongly oppose Caesar on every front.</p>
		<p>Overall Cicero was very strongly opposed to those he believed to be a threat to the Res publica, and he wasn't swayed by their power or influence to change his stance or beliefs to align with theirs.</p>
		<p>* Showing that his outright opposition was seen to waiver when having to choose who to support when both don't align <sup>with</sup> <del>with</del> his morals or with his belief of the res publica.</p>

## Section B overview

Section B offered optionality in the form of 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 which it achieved. Thereafter the position within that level was adjusted depending on each candidate's use of modern scholarship.

Examiners noted in candidates' responses all references to secondary and/or modern (post-Gibbon) scholarship. They also noted that not all of these necessarily supported in a meaningful way the arguments being made by candidates. While it is probably true that at Rome in the 1st century BCE '*amicitia*' was a 'weapon of politics' (Syme), for AO2 credit at A Level, examiners require more than mere passing allusion such as this. A minimum of two modern scholars should be referenced.

Examiners are pleased to report this year that an increasing number of candidates did engage more with the ideas, rather than merely the catchphrases of Bispham, Beard, and others.

### Question 9\*

9\* 'The Roman Republic would not have survived if it had allowed the behaviour of Verres to go unpunished.'

Evaluate how far you agree with this statement. Include reference to Cicero's speech against Verres in your answer.

[30]

This question was far less commonly answered than Question 10 (see below), probably because on first reading, candidates' immediate response will have been, perhaps understandably, that since the Roman Republic did not, in fact, survive, then there was no real discussion to be had. However, some candidates did recognise in the question an invitation to discuss Cicero's claim in his opening remarks of *In Verrem I* that he is addressing Rome in a 'time of crisis'; they set about interrogating the idea that corruption, most clearly embodied in Verres, was an existential risk to the Republic, and the cause of its eventual and possibly inevitable demise.

Many candidates did indeed successfully convince the examiners that the corruption of Verres and men like him was an important element in the fall of the Roman Republic; by the same token, many made a convincing case for one or more of the various other problems which beset the Republic, arguing that for reasons other than corruption, the Republic was doomed, regardless of Verres and his sort.

The best responses were those that displayed a sound knowledge of Verres' alleged behaviour, and of the threats posed to political stability by, for example, the system of the *cursus honorum*, militarism, the ambition, pride and obstinacy of certain individuals. A common weakness of responses was a tendency to slip into a narrative, rather than an analytical approach, whereby candidates found themselves getting carried away with a retelling of Verres' alleged exploits in Sicily, or even a largely irrelevant (at least to this question) exposition of Cicero's oratorical techniques in his speech against Verres.

## Question 10\*

**10\*** 'Personal ambition was the most important factor in making individuals successful in the Late Republic.'

Evaluate how far you agree with this statement by discussing at least **three** individuals. **[30]**

By far the more popular of the Section B questions, candidates were here invited to discuss the political careers of any three (or, indeed, more) individuals. Candidates should be made aware that, as in Question 8 above, observation of the rubric is essential: responses that considered only one or two politicians were not rewarded with the AO1 marks they might otherwise have achieved. And, equally important to note, candidates who chose, in the time available, to review the careers of five or six men were often obliged to deal with them in insufficient detail to merit the highest AO1 marks.

The danger in answering this question was, as in Question 9 above, a tendency for candidates simply to forget themselves in a narrative recitation of the CVs, or at least the edited highlights of the CVs, of three famous men. There is plenty of material to draw on, candidates have learned it, and they want to earn credit for it; however, such material will only ever achieve AO1 credit (to a maximum of 10 marks). Candidates should not lose sight of the 20 marks available for evaluating and analysing such material in the service of answering the question as asked.

This year, many candidates failed properly to address themselves to, for example, the definition of 'success', or to the various other factors, apart from personal ambition, that may or may not have been necessary for success in the late Republic. Personal ambition itself is, too, a complicated concept: candidates often found it difficult to produce more than variations on something like 'Caesar was ambitious; he was successful; therefore ambition is important for success.' Cato may have been a 'stoic', and Cicero may have had principles – but were they not also ambitious? Did Caesar want anything more than personal power? Candidates may well conclude that he did not, but AO2 marks reward the process of weighing up the evidence.

The best responses were those that dealt with three contrasting careers, and discussed in each case the extent to which they could be called 'successful' and to what particular driver this success was owed (or on the lack of which particular driver failure could be blamed).

### Assessment for learning: secondary source material and 'scholars'



As stated in the Section B overview, in 30-mark essays, the final AO2 mark is first determined by deciding the level of the response, according to the overall quality of its analysis, interpretation and evaluation of the matter under discussion. Then, within the level, the mark is adjusted according to the candidate's use of modern scholarship. Mere 'name dropping' or tagging catchphrases will not secure the top mark in the level. Candidates are encouraged to 'use' modern scholarship in support of their own arguments, to 'engage with' the scholars they have read.

## OCR support



OCR has produced a blog providing more information about the A Level Classical Civilisation scholarship requirement.

Read the blog [here](#).

## Exemplar 3

		Caesar's ambition, however, can also be seen to have been <del>of</del> a fault that contributed to his death. In establishing himself as dictator perpetuo (dictator forever), Caesar can be seen to have established himself as a almost monarchical figure. Indeed, this was highly irregular for the Roman Republic,
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		and <del>was</del> <del>seen</del> <del>as</del> here we see an example of <u>Tempest's</u> argument that Caesar strayed from the "path of tradition". <del>Thus</del> Caesar's ambition in establishing himself in such a position, with no regard for <del>the</del> <del>existing</del> <del>convention</del> <del>and</del> <del>the</del> <del>convention</del> , led many to believe that Caesar was acting in a way too similar to a king. Thus, <del>as</del> <del>see</del> a group of senators led by Brutus and Cassius assassinated Caesar on the Ides of March 44 BC as a way of checking Caesar's ambition and preventing the continuation of such autocratic rule.
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		In Marcus Cato we see a character whose ambition failed him in many regards. Cato was ambitious in that he wanted to achieve political success without compromising his moral values. <del>As per</del> <u>Bispham</u> says that Cato was upright, moral, and inflexible. This is <del>can be seen to have come into that Cato</del> <del>was so moral, he this way, he refused</del> to use bribery during elections and therefore
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Exemplar 3 shows, firstly, a good example of the 'use in argument' of a scholar (Tempest): the candidate is building an argument about Caesar's attitude to the Roman constitution, based on knowledge and understanding which is strengthened by a knowledge of secondary literature. Later, the candidate's quotation of Bispham's remark about Cato is much closer to simple 'name dropping'. The response as a whole was deemed to have answered the description of a Level 4 response in AO2 (13–16 marks). The candidate has fulfilled the requirement to acknowledge two scholars, so moves away from the bottom mark of the level. The Tempest reference helps to push the response higher up the level; the Bispham reference adds nothing of real value. The final AO2 mark was 15.

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