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A LEVEL

Examiners' report

ANCIENT HISTORY

H407

For first teaching in 2017

H407/11 Summer 2024 series

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Introduction

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

The reports will include a general commentary on answers' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of answer 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

Performance in this option was generally good, in line with performance levels from the previous series. There was still a number of scripts this year that did not give the correct number for the question being answered, or, worse, no number at all when they started a new question.

Engagement with the modern interpretation was impressive showing that over the lifetime of the specification, answers have become aligned with the principle of analysing 'how convincing' in relation to the historical arguments put forward in the extract rather than simply showing what the ancient sources said on the factual content of the extract. There were still many examples of ancient source evaluation in the answer to Question 3.

Among weaker answers, in both the period and depth essay questions, there were still comments such as 'the sources tell us ...' without any mention of which source(s) was/were being referred to, and there were also several responses with no reference to sources at all. There was also in weaker responses incorrect attributions to Herodotus/ Thucydides/ Xenophon; it should not be difficult to establish a simple timeline of source authors to overcome this. The same applies to confusion over the Hellenic/ Delian/ Peloponnesian Leagues. There were many comments that Herodotus and Aristotle were Athenian and Plutarch Roman.

There was also the use of 'ostracism' as equivalent to exile from Athens; the last ostracism was in 417, and Thucydides was not ostracised after Amphipolis.

In evaluation, it was commonly stated that Thucydides lived in Sparta in his exile, but all he says is that he had 'access to the Peloponnesian side' (V.26).

However, the vast majority of answers dealt well with the subject material. Convincing conclusions were often reached, well supported by the evidence. Answers demonstrated a strong understanding of the Peloponnesian War, particularly its causes and effects.

The essays in the depth study were particularly impressive, as answers frequently referenced sources in detail and presented convincing, often sophisticated arguments that led to well-reasoned and thoughtful conclusions.

Answers who did well on this paper generally:

- Answers who did less well on this paper generally:
- demonstrated a thorough understanding of the studied period
- maintained an accurate and clear understanding of the timeline
- chose sources specifically relevant to the question's terms
- prioritised addressing the question's terms, using evidence and knowledge to support the explanation
- evaluation focused on assessing the reliability of the specific point being made.

- incorrectly attributed an event to the wrong person or group
- did not concentrate on the main issue of the question, instead giving a general overview of the period
- provided a descriptive account of events rather than an analysis
- offered a general evaluation rather than a specific one.

Section A overview

Overall, candidates demonstrated a solid understanding of the key events in the two periods addressed by the essay questions. Successful responses effectively utilised the evidence to draw convincing conclusions. The strongest answers adhered closely to the specific terms of the question, with the evaluation of the evidence often being compelling and relevant.

Question 1*

1* 'The emergence of Athens as a superior naval power significantly affected relations with other states in the period 478–446 BC.'

To what extent 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. [30]

This was the less popular of the two option questions, however, it was generally well answered.

A common comment in evaluation was that Thucydides was a contemporary of the *pentecontaetia*, but this is not really valid for at least the first 40 years as he was born in c.460. In considering the effect of Athenian growing power on Sparta many mentioned the (re-)construction of Athens' walls by Themistocles in the 470s. However, the vast majority of these referred to these as the 'Long Walls'; these were not constructed until c.457 (Thucydides 1.107).

Those who were able to use the evidence of Athenian decrees received due credit and, due to the debate over the dating of some, those which could be either 440s or 420s were allowed (Coinage Decree).

Many answers mentioned Thucydides' judgement at 1.23 and this was given if it was related to events of the specified time period.

There were references to the Corinthian complaints in 432 (outside the specified timespan in the question), specifically Corcyra, Epidamnus and Potidaea; this was allowed if it was related to events within 478–446.

Many better responses did discuss relations with Persia, while weaker ones confined themselves to Greek states, or even just those on the mainland, ignoring the Delian League.

Some responses included discussion of other factors affecting relations with other states (economic, attitude of allies), but only the best related this back to naval power; the question did not require discussion of other factors.

Responses often explored the Athenian relationship with allies/ Delian League members – revolts of Thasos and Naxos being commonly identified.

The roles of Pericles and Cimon were sometimes explored in some detail and the Athenian relationship with Persia in the years 478–446. There was some good use of some of the epigraphic evidence integrated well with good use of Thucydides and Plutarch.

Misconception



A large problem among weaker scripts was using evidence from outside the dates in the question (where mentioned) or the dates of the specification (especially in Section B), and not reading the question and extracts carefully; details of this for individual questions are detailed below.

Question 2*

2* How important was the quality of the leadership of Athens and Sparta in the events of the period 446–404 BC?

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

The more popular of the Section A optional questions. Again, it was generally very well answered.

Some answers chose to interpret the question as the leadership of the cities of Athens and Sparta within the wider Greek world, and this was given due credit.

The biggest issue for weaker answers (and some stronger ones) was discussing examples from the whole period 492–404 instead of 446–404 as specified in the question.

Evaluation of the sources, for obvious reasons, tended to centre on Thucydides and Xenophon. Discussion of the Corinthian complaint in Thucydides either mentioned that Thucydides was present in Sparta, or that no Athenian could have known what was discussed. Thucydides actually tells us that some Athenian representatives were in Sparta at the time. Others stated that these representatives would have been present for the debate between Archidamus and Sthenelaidas, but Thucydides (1.79) tells all 'outsiders' were asked to leave the assembly.

There were several answers who confused Thucydides discussion and praise of Pericles' leadership with the Funeral Speech which was actually delivered by Pericles.

Responses identified a good range of leaders – most commonly Pericles, Cleon, Alcibiades, and Nicias for Athens, and Brasidas, Lysander, and Archidamus for Sparta. Less commonly, the following leaders were identified: Demosthenes, Gylippus, Sthenelaidas, and Agis II. The mark scheme also identified Pleistoanax and Lamachus, but these leaders did not seem to have been used at all in responses.

Events typically explored included Pericles' strategy of remaining within the Long Walls during the Attic invasions and the impact of the plague on this strategy, the Athenian victory at Pylos, and Brasidas' successes in Thrace/ Chalcidice. The Sicilian expedition, the occupation of Decelea, and the battle of Aegospotami were also explored.

Some responses also considered the role of leadership in a wider sense, with the leadership of Athens or Sparta being examined over the period in relation to their allies. The role of Persia was also addressed in this question, with leaders' relationships with Persians such as Cyrus and Tissaphernes explored in relation to Lysander and Alcibiades.

There was confusion over the chronology of events around Amphipolis in discussion of Brasidas, some giving the battle in which Brasidas and Cleon died as 424, others stating that Thucydides failed in 422 and then went into exile.

Weaker answers did not answer with reference to the whole period mentioned in the question, concentrating only on 432–404.

Exemplar 1

It seems the importance of the quality of the Athenian
and Spirton landership in the events between 446 and
 404BC were dramablally impromt in shapping the
outcome of the Peloponovian war according to our saves,
 which evaluate new military pratgies and somes
as they correspond with each other. However there
Greek leaders down't only communitate manget
hemselves, Acitiades is a prime example of Green

leadersehip companiently with persions for aid, which
he gok Sporta gels, due to Lyonder and Cyrus
coming to agreement based aff of Lysnowi's great
reputation. Again, Lysudisis anality secures furling
for the sportun new, displaying it importance.
Philmh breaks ceft his account here, falling
to ever consider the effects of Persian and or
 economize fullers in the war, but we get most of
our nom atom from Xenophon, who seems to
 mand most of the he secure of finds as a product
of Lysinder. Although this owns we important of audistup
all the same, it is whely become Kenophon was entranced
by Sporton are and piperes, rang been welcomed
 meir by the king after as exile from Gree Muno.
We know he mus in administrancel Lynnyus, and so
sk is a valid assurathing he might print 5 porters
in a better light over alres when given the clause.
Alibriades made his even save to do too, as although

marting, his qualities speak to two only of a spectnum,
in terms of values and invality, his construct side-snap-
prog us a quality that made very distible him in
the more world great world, although as next
alluntedge how it muy store informental in its events.

This is the conclusion of the essay, and it is very strong. It revisits arguments from the main body of the essay and draws together multiple themes explored to reach an overarching judgement which is convincing. There is a good blend of interpretation, analysis, and evaluation of the evidence in this conclusion.

Misconception



There was also confusion over the trial of the generals after Arginusae with six, eight or ten being executed; eight of the year's ten generals were put on trial of whom six were executed and two (who did not return to Athens for trial) went into exile.

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Question 3

3 Read the interpretation below.

... Salamis was a decisive battle because it broke the Persian navy, but it did not drive the Persians out of Greece. Salamis brought final victory nearly into the Greeks' hands, but it was not the last battle of the war.

Contrary to what Eurybiades had predicted at Andros in the autumn of 480 BC, the Persians did not all leave Greece. A large enemy army remained on the Greek peninsula, threatening Attica and the Peloponnese beyond, and aided and comforted by such famous Greek states as Macedon and Thebes. In the end, only a wall of Spartan spears and a sea of Spartan blood would drive them out. The result would bring glory to Sparta but not to Eurybiades, for he was an admiral and not a general. And Athens would gain glory too, for its spearmen stood in the front lines as well and fought hard, but none of that glory would go to Themistocles.

B. Strauss, The Battle of Salamis

How convincing do you find B. Strauss' interpretation of the importance of the battles of Salamis and Plataea for the Greeks' final victory in the war against Xerxes?

You must use your knowledge of the historical period and the ancient sources you have studied to analyse and evaluate B. Strauss' interpretation. [20]

Generally speaking, this passage question was engaged with well by many answers. Points were identified that were convincing/ unconvincing typically included – the battles of Salamis and Plataea, the role of Themistocles and Thebes and Macedon.

Additional own knowledge was usually integrated to support discussion and often this knowledge included; battles of Mycale and Thermopylae, the evidence of the Serpent Column, the retreat of Xerxes and the impact that this had on Persian forces, the role of other Greek states – notably Corinth at Salamis and the clever actions of Themistocles – leaving messages for the Ionians and the message to Xerxes on the eve of Salamis. The most common ancient sources used in relation to this question were Herodotus and Plutarch. When Thucydides was mentioned, it was usually in error.

Only very occasionally were the following potential discussion points identified; the role of Aegina at Salamis, the role of Tegea at Plataea, the low Spartan casualties in the battle at Plataea and the role of Pausanias. Very occasionally, answers demonstrated problems with chronology and incorporated Darius' invasion into the response.

Due credit was given for mention of Mycale as the question does refer to 'the war against Xerxes', so even discussion of Eurymedon was allowed if appropriately set in context; however, others went further to discuss Cimon's victory in Cyprus and the ensuing Peace of Kallias, which were after Xerxes' death.

In discussion of specific points in the interpretation, many picked out the concentration in the interpretation on Sparta and Athens, with several mentioning the Serpent Column as well as Herodotus as evidence of the number of Greek states involved at Plataea. There is still some confusion over the number of states mentioned on the column – it is thirty-one (31).

Many questioned the statement that Themistocles would receive no glory with most discussing his portrayal in Herodotus and Plutarch.

'Athens would gain glory too' was frequently discussed, with the best answers able to refer to the references to Athens' part in defeating the Persians in the debate at Sparta in 432.

Most did pick out the statement about 'sea of Spartan blood' to criticise, with a few noting the small numbers (ninety-one) of Spartan dead. Some, however, thought 'sea' meant this was a reference to a naval battle.

Several suggested that Strauss had fallen for the 'Spartan mirage' created by Leonidas at Thermopylae.

Section B overview

Many responses to Question 4 focused solely on the passages, leading to less convincing conclusions about its usefulness. The evaluation of sources in Questions 5 and 6 was generally strong, although some candidates still tend to copy standard phrases about each source at the end of their answers, often repeating the same paragraphs, instead of assessing the reliability of the specific passage they used as evidence. However, some candidates who did try to evaluate the passages tended to repeat the same evaluation after each use of the same author. The goal should be to provide a contextual evaluation of the passage.

Question 4

4 Read the passages below.

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How useful are these passages for our understanding of how the Spartans viewed possessions and wealth? [12]

The overall profile of responses to this question was a lot better than in recent years with the vast majority scoring above Level 3, although there is still a trend to regard it as the least important question as it attracts the fewest marks, so leaving to last and clearly often running out of time. Some were very brief, even from otherwise very good answers, 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 and is vital in order to reach the highest level.

Other answers, who tended to be among the strongest, actually answered this question first.

There were many good comments from other sources about the *syssitia* in terms of 'living together as a community', but very few picked up on 'governors' of 'Greek cities' with any comment about dating or to what Xenophon is referring.

Very few answers addressed the issue of the source of the increased wealth mentioned by Xenophon, with the best answers picking-up on the fact that things had changed in Sparta.

Many referenced Plutarch's description of Lycurgus' approach to coined money, with only a few in evaluation going to point out that coins had not been invented by the time of Lycurgus' supposed reforms.

Some of the best answers highlighted Aristotle's 'no common state fund for ... wars' with reference to Archidamus' speech in Thucydides and 'bad at paying taxes' but pointed out that in fact contributions to *syssitia* were a type of tax and compulsory.

Most were able to discuss 'most land is owned' with reference to Lycurgus distribution of land in Plutarch, and some mentioned Aristotle's reference to 2/5 being owned by women.

Most of the better answers also included references to various individual Spartans accused of accepting bribes/ stealing money, etc. when discussing 'individuals with a love of money'.

A few mentioned the irony of Xenophon complaining about the lapse of old rules, including admitting foreigners, alongside his own circumstances, but this extract does not mention this. However, with a relevant reference from outside the passages to this, credit was given.

Question 5*

5* 'Commanders, other than kings, were far more effective as military leaders of the Spartans than the kings themselves.'

To what extent do the sources agree with this statement?

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 just over two-thirds of candidates answering it. There was a good range of answers ranging from some quite weak to the very top of the range.

Some responses discussed the rule of the *ephors*, which was allowed if connected to military decisions, especially Sthenelaidas' influence in getting the Spartans to vote for war in 432 BC; again, answers need to read the question carefully.

Many responses discussed Alcibiades' advice in Sparta; this was allowed as he was not a king, as long they pointed out that he was not a Spartan.

Pausanias was allowed as an example of both a king and a non-king; the former because he was a regent, the latter because he was not actually a king. The same applies to Nicomedes' leadership at Tanagra in 457. However, many answers discussed Pausanias' leadership at Plataea, as well as Leonidas' at Thermopylae, which are both outside the time period (478–404 BC) for this depth study. Likewise, some discussed the argument between Damaratus and Cleomenes. The latter was allowed as it impacted on ensuing leadership by kings as only one was allowed on any campaign, especially if it was mentioned that it was before the prescribed time period. Although there are references to Leonidas and Pausanias within the prescribed sources, none of these specifically refer to their leadership. Therefore, discussion of these was using knowledge from the period study and therefore not allowed as it would put these answers at an advantage over those choosing the other two depth studies.

Pausanias was allowed as an example of poor leadership because of his attitude to the other Greeks in 478/7 and subsequent recall and disgrace, although some stated that he had received Persian bribes, but this is not specifically mentioned in the sources.

Several responses mentioned that commanders might have turned out as better military commanders as they had gone through the *agoge* while the kings famously did not.

Some responses discussed alternative factors than leadership that led to Spartan victory in the Peloponnesian War, especially the importance of Persian financial support, but many did not give due importance to the qualities of Lysander which were what guaranteed and maintained this support.

However, most responses did highlight the qualities of Lysander as a leader, although there was some confusion of Lycurgus/Lysander. There was also some confusion over the amount of the pay rise the Persian funds allowed Lysander to give to rowers – 1 to 3, 2 to 3 and the correct 3 to 4 obols.

Most responses were able to argue convincingly in support of the statement in the question with poor kings as leaders and good non-kings. Only a few also discussed poor leadership from non-kings – e.g. Callikratidas and Alcidas.

Among discussion of various kings there was some confusion of their names, and which one did what – especially Archidamus/ Agis/ Agesilaos. There was also some confusion over the problems Agis faced with some stating he was recalled from Decelea and fined rather than the sanctions put on him in 418.

Most also contained good discussion of the obvious non-king commanders, Brasidas/ Gylippus/ Lysander, though there was confusion among weaker answers over which were *mothakes* or *ephor*.

Only the very best answers picked up on the different types of command kings and others were given, the former traditional land-based commands with primarily Spartan hoplites within the 'old-Greek' world, the latter non-traditional land-based outside the traditional area (e.g. Brasidas) or naval, with some pointing out that this could also be seen as early as the Persian Wars (Eurybiades) although outside the study period. A few mentioned that in order to defeat Athens, Sparta needed a fleet and therefore the glory went to the non-king commander(s) of those fleets.

Some were also able to discuss Brasidas' earlier distinguished actions before his Thracian campaign (Methone 431 and Pylos 425, although neither of these references in Thucydides are in the prescription).

A few responses interpreted 'commanders' as unit commanders and highlighted the behaviour of Amompharetus at Plataea (outside the period) and Aristocles and Hipponoidas (even though the names were not quoted) at Mantinea. Credit was given for the discussion of the latter.

The date of Lysander's involvement as navarch was frequently erroneously given as 411 BC, and in fact the overall chronology of the Ionian War was frequently muddled.

The majority of answers concentrated on events during the Peloponnesian War, although some did give Archidamus' quick response to the earthquake in 465 as an example of good leadership.

Exemplar 2

	. Finally, the sources give a wired depiction of the trings'
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T.4		Furthermore, his white the convince be Spatiste assents not to
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		there in a remove that Perioder was bibling Arhidmy with
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This is an excellent example of an analytical approach to a depth study essay. The response deals with the central issue of the effectiveness of commanders other than kings in leading the Spartan military, reaching firm judgements based on the evidence presented and discussed in the answer. It qualifies its analysis with limitations on the evidence while exploring the roles of various leaders (kings and non-kings) in leading the Spartan military campaigns and strategy. It blends the use of evidence, evaluation, and pertinent argument well. The examples from the sources are relevant and detailed. The paragraph reaches convincing conclusions through well-derived points of reason.

Question 6*

6* 'Sparta's relationship with the Peloponnese League was more of a hindrance to Sparta than a benefit.'

To what extent do you agree that this is an accurate assessment of the period 478–404 BC?

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 essay question, and generally wasn't answered as well as Question 5. As with Question 5, some responses discussed other factors which affected Sparta which was not necessary for this question.

Some responses mentioned the importance of Corinth and Megara as buffer states and how that influenced Spartan policy towards them, and also their lack of navy (with reference to Archidamus' speech) and Corinth's importance.

Many mentioned the importance of Corinth in bringing about Sparta declaring war and also their unhappiness with Sparta agreeing to the Peace of Nicias (although there was confusion with the Thirty Years' Peace). There was also confusion of the Hellenic/ Delian/ Peloponnesian Leagues among weaker answers.

Some of the better responses discussed the bi-cameral format of the Peloponnesian League and the problems this sometimes caused the Spartans, especially with reference to Corinth at the time of the revolt of Samos.

Some answers criticised the allies for not coming to assist the Spartans in 465, but Thucydides says that Spartans sent home Athens 'while keeping the rest of their allies'.

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