

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

ANCIENT HISTORY

J198

For first teaching in 2017

J198/01 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 1 series overview

This was the first series with an extra 15 minutes. Candidates in general used this to good effect, making the most of the time with their depth study essays. Alexander the Great, continued to be the most popular option with fewer centres choosing From Tyranny to Democracy or Athens in the Age of Pericles. There were still a significant number of candidates who attempted all the options on the paper and in contrast to previous series, there were several centres who had not looked at previous guidance on how best to approach questions and which Assessment Objectives were covered in the scope of the question, leading to candidates being unable to access the top levels. Candidates' engagement with the Persian period study continues to be very strong, and there was a wide variety of stories from Herodotus shared.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<p>in the period study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provided specific evidence points in their answers rather than general evaluation, especially in Question 3, where AO2 is not being examined drew comparisons between more than two kings for Question 4 in the essay, were able to define their understanding of the terms 'civilised' and 'tolerant' and argue when kings showed both sides, giving specific examples <p>in the depth studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> in the sources-based questions, were able to draw out at least three points and were explaining what they show us had discussions of accuracy that were not generic and were based specifically on the source wrote responses to essay questions that did not contain generic source analysis paragraphs and were linked directly to the topic. 	<p>in the period study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> chose one or two points from the passage for Question 3 and Question 4 and did not provide further context in Question 4 only drew comparison with Darius, and only using how he was mentioned in the passage in the essay, those who focused solely on the good king/bad king trope were not usually able to access the higher levels if they carried out source evaluation in all these questions, were not focused on the Assessment Objectives examined in this part of the exam, and struggled to access the higher levels <p>in the depth studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> were not confident with the content of the set sources and who produced them were not confident with the timelines for the 10-mark questions and when events would have happened ran out of time for the essays or did not give specific details or did not know the focus of the question.

Section A overview

It was really positive to see students engaging with the period study enthusiastically. Candidates were more confident in approaching Questions 3 and 4, and there were far fewer examples across all questions with students evaluating source material with generic statements. There was some confusion between how to approach Question 5 and the essay questions in the depth studies.

Question 1 (a)

- 1**
(a) Identify **one** of the names of the man overthrown by Darius in 522 BC. [1]

This question was accessible to most candidates.

Question 1 (b)

- (b)** Identify **two** of Darius' building / engineering projects. [2]

This question again was accessible to most candidates and there was a variety of responses.

Question 1 (c)

- (c)** Name the region of the Persian Empire which revolted in 499 BC. [1]

This question was accessible to most candidates.

Question 2

- 2** Outline how Cyrus treated the peoples that he conquered. [6]

Candidates were able to access this question, and the most successful responses gave three different events with candidates expanding them with clear details. This type of response does not have to be long, six sentence with a point and explanation in clear prose.

Misconception



The Jewish people are not mentioned on the Cyrus Cylinder. Candidates frequently stated that this was written on it.

Question 3

- 3 Using details from **Passage A** and your own knowledge, what can we learn about the way that Xerxes saw himself as King of Persia? [10]

Candidates were able to draw out information regarding how Xerxes saw himself. However, in this series there were fewer candidates addressing the 'and your own knowledge' aspect of the question. Less confident responses were unable to give specific details regarding the points of comparison. Candidates are not expected to have seen Passage A before the exam, and it was positive to see that candidates were familiar with the use of inscriptions and were able to draw information from it. The most successful responses saw candidates draw out information from the whole passage and give their own specific knowledge to support why they had drawn this out. This does not need to be quotations from other sources.

Question 4

- 4 Using details from **Passage A** and your own knowledge, how significant were the actions of the previous Persian kings in influencing the activities of Xerxes? [15]

The most successful responses to this question drew out specific points from the passage and compared an activity of Xerxes with that of other kings, for example Xerxes' building projects at Persepolis with his father Darius' and Cyrus' at Pasargadae. There were some excellent responses discussing the importance of the name Achaemenid and Darius' attempts to legitimise himself as well as the worship of the god Ahuramazda and the use of religion, comparing with Cyrus references to Marduk and the importance of this in controlling Babylon.

Misconception



Cyrus is not linked with the god Ahuramazda; this is an innovation by Darius.

Exemplar 1

4		<p>Firstly, the significance of previous Kings was very large as he constantly references his ancestors throughout the passage in 'Son of Darius', 'my father' and 'built by my father', this really highlights that his actions were influenced as he has his father constantly in mind. This is further conveyed by my own knowledge of Xerxes invading Greece where his father failed to before. Xerxes is trying to finish what Darius started so the other Kings' actions were very significant.</p>
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The structure of this response allows the candidate to cover all the Assessment Objectives in a paragraph in the question.

Question 5*

- 5* 'Persian kings were civilised and tolerant.'
To what extent do you agree with this view?

[20]



Spelling, punctuation and grammar and the use of specialist terminology [5]

There were some excellent responses to this, particularly those students who balanced each of the kings and considered the positives and negatives of each. Some of the best responses discussed Cyrus' initial plans for Croesus and how those changed, and his treatment of the Ionians in the period directly afterwards. Candidates are reminded that there does not need to be any assessment of the reliability or accuracy of ancient sources, except if making a comment on Herodotus' attitude towards Cambyses and how this can be compared to Udjahorresnet. Some candidates did follow the good king/bad king pattern and the accomplishments of each king were not always confidently recorded. There were a significant number of responses who discussed whether kings were 'tolerable', and tolerant was spelled in various ways. As this question carries SPaG marks, candidates are reminded that it is worth taking time to make sure that the vocabulary used in their response is correct.

Section B overview

This continues to be the least preferred option on the paper.

Question 6 (a)

- 6**
(a) Name the person who introduced social and economic reforms to Athens in 594 BC. [1]

This is in the set sources; Solon was frequently named.

Question 6 (b)

- (b) State **two** of the economic reforms undertaken by the Peisistratids in Athens. [2]

Candidates were able to access this question well.

Question 6 (c)

- (c) Name the **two** families who were rivals for power in Athens in 510 BC. [2]

As above, candidates were able to access this question well.

Question 7

- 7** What can we learn from **Passage B** about Polycrates' leadership of Samos? [5]

There were successful responses here where candidates were able to pick out and explain key ideas from the passage.

Question 8

- 8 Using details from **Passage B**, how accurate do you think Herodotus' account of these events is? [5]

More successful responses were able to discuss that Herodotus has a personal connection to Samos and this impacted how he wrote about it. There were logical steps taken in the evaluation of the source's accuracy.

Misconception



Precise numbers do not make something accurate, especially with Herodotus. Encourage students to think about them as rough estimates of large numbers.

Question 9

- 9 Explain the significance of Cleisthenes to the events that led to the removal of tyranny in Athens. [10]

There were some very successful responses to this question, understanding the part that Cleisthenes played. Some candidates did struggle with the timeline and were unclear regarding who had carried out which action.

Question 10*

- 10* 'The introduction of democracy in Athens only created problems for the Athenians.'
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. [20]

There were some very successful responses to this question, in which candidates listed the positive and negative impact of democracy and were able to give very detailed assessments of the point of view of the source writers, e.g. their aristocratic bias or how when they were writing impacted on how democracy was viewed. Some responses drew comparisons between Athens and other city states, and when argued well, produced some very interesting responses. Very few responses did not use sources at all, which was positive to read.

Section C overview

This was the second most popular option, but far fewer responses than the Alexander the Great depth study.

Question 11 (a)

11

(a) Give **two** details about the job of an Athenian magistrate.

[2]

There were a variety of responses to this.

Question 11 (b)

(b) State the length of time an Athenian citizen was ostracized for.

[1]

This was answered well.

Question 11 (c)

(c) Name **two** functions of the Athenian Agora.

[2]

Candidates were able to state the functions of the Agora/marketplace.

Question 12

12 What can we learn from **Passage C** about the portrayal of women's lives in Athens?

[5]

Candidates were able to draw out a good number of details from this text and were able to discuss relevant points well.

Question 13

- 13 Using details from **Passage C**, how accurate do you think Euripides' Medea is about the portrayal of women's lives in Athens?

[5]

There were some very successful responses. However, there were lots of responses that did not recognise that it was an excerpt from a tragic play and that it was written by a man, performed by a man and most likely to an audience of men. There were some very successful responses which made comparisons to other set sources and that due to the likely status of women at that time, this is an accurate portrayal.

Question 14

- 14 Explain the significance of Pericles as a military leader of Athens.

[10]

There were some particularly successful responses to this question, with candidates showing they were clear about the key military actions that Pericles took. Less confident responses were able to discuss his cultural achievements, however they were unable to discuss what he had done as a military leader.

Question 15*

- 15* 'Athenian festivals were the most significant cultural success of Athens during the years 462–429 BC.'

How far 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.

[20]

Candidates were able to discuss the cultural success and significance of the games. However, there was a range in the level of understanding regarding what happened at festivals and what the counterpoints were. Candidates were able to draw on a range of sources, especially the inclusion of literary and archaeological sources to support their points. The most successful responses were able to draw out how festivals, the building programme and political developments were so closely linked that the significance of one only exists alongside the others.

Misconception



The Olympics were not part of the Panathenaic Games.

Section D overview

This continues to be the most popular option. It was really positive to see candidates engaging with the sources more in the depth essays. This year there was a return to the use of Oliver Stone's *Alexander* as source material; this must be used with extreme caution as, although Robin Lane Fox was an advisor, there are elements created for dramatic effect.

Question 16 (a)

16

(a) Name the city where Alexander died.

[1]

A variety of cities were listed here.

Question 16 (b)

(b) Give **two** examples of the difficulties faced by Alexander and his army on their return from India.

[2]

Candidates did this well, however there were a significant number who did not qualify their responses.

Question 16 (c)

(c) Give **two** examples of the weapons used by Alexander's army.

[2]

This was answered well by candidates.

Question 17

17 What can we learn from **Source D** about Alexander's religious beliefs?

[5]

A significant number of candidates were unable to identify the elements of this despite it being a set source and commenting on it as if it were the elephant head coin. Candidates asserted that the figure of Athena on the reverse was Alexander himself, often holding an angel. When candidates answered this well, they were able to highlight Zeus Ammon, the fusion between Greek and Egyptian deities and Athena holding the goddess Nike, symbolising his belief in military victory.

Exemplar 2

17)		From source D, we can learn that Alexander's religious beliefs were that he descended from divinity. This can be seen as Alexander is wearing horns on one side of the coin, which links to Zeus Ammon, therefore directly linking the two. From source D, it is also observable that Athena was a key figure in Alexander's religious beliefs. This is because Athena has one of the sides of the coin and is clad in armour which shows respect for her and her character story. We are also able to infer that Alexander's religious beliefs were agreed upon by his subjects. This can be observed as Lysimachus had minted the coin, which means there had been coin production and his subjects agreed with his relations to Zeus Ammon and his divinity.
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This response demonstrates how three pieces of information could be taken from the source and explained. This is a top Level 3 response.

Question 18

- 18 Using details from **Source D**, how accurately do you think the images on the tetradrachm reflect Alexander's character? [5]

There were a significant number of candidates who were unable to recognise that this coin was minted by one of Alexander's successors and a member of his companions who would have known him very well. The most successful responses to this question were able to draw on the propaganda nature of the coin and made comparisons with his presentation in Plutarch and Arrian, particularly regarding his links with the divine.

Question 19

19 Explain the significance of the mass marriages at Susa.

[10]

This question highlighted that some candidates were unclear regarding the timeline of events after Gaugamela and when Alexander's relationship with his companions changed. A significant number of responses placed the marriages before the murders of Cleitus and Parmenion. Candidates who responded well to this question were able to draw on the relationship between Hephaestion and Alexander and the marriages between them and Darius's daughters. There were a significant number of candidates who believed that this was when Roxane married Alexander.

Question 20*

20* 'The most important person in Alexander's life was Olympias.'

How far 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.

[20]

The most successful responses to this question were able to evaluate Olympias' influence on Alexander in his childhood, understanding her relationship with Philip and the presentation of her in the sources, particularly the trope in Plutarch of powerful women being negatively portrayed. There were comparisons with Philip and one or two companions. There were a significant number of candidates who argued that Bucephalus was the most important person in Alexander's life. Candidates were able to make some reference to sources, although the knowledge of which source writer wrote which account was unclear. There were excellent responses making links between how relationships were used by source writers to add to their narrative and wish to present Alexander.

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