

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

**OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in
Classical Civilisation**

H408

For first teaching in 2017

H408/22 Summer 2025 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 responses 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 [Teach Cambridge](#).

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Paper 22 series overview

The topic maintained popularity this year. Candidates showed that they mostly had good knowledge of both the events in Augustus' life and the sources. Generally, candidates made use of a good range of sources. Many candidates were not secure in the dates of both Augustus' career and of the sources, which limited their usefulness in advancing the discussion. More successful responses used the sources as evidence for the opinions expressed in them, but there were some candidates who did not use many sources in the essay questions. Use of scholars was variable, ranging from good engagement with several scholars to no scholars at all.

Legibility and quality of written communication is once again an issue – particularly in the spelling of names and technical terms. Candidates should read through what they have written to make sure that their answers communicate their ideas clearly and effectively. A lack of paragraphing in many responses makes it harder for examiners to follow the train of thought of the candidates.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• read the questions carefully • used both literary and material culture evidence • provided quotations/close reference to the literary sources • were aware of the historical and social context of the sources, including the relevant dates • addressed the question directly • came to a conclusion • in higher tariff questions, used paragraphs to clarify points made and the line of argument • in the essay questions, discussed sources and their effect • in the essay questions, used scholars effectively with good engagement.	• made little reference to sources in the essay questions • used information which was not relevant to the question • wrote lengthy introductions to some responses • started a response to higher tariff questions with a conclusion and then disagreed with their introduction, leading to a confusing argument • in the higher tariff questions, wrote a continuous response which made it difficult to follow the argument or the separate points being made • in the essay questions, made little, if any, use of scholars with little, if any, engagement • were unsure of the chronology of Augustus' career, and of the dates of the production of the sources.

Assessment for learning



Remind candidates to:

- follow the instructions carefully
- number questions clearly and carefully, especially when identifying which essay is being
- write clearly and legibly
- use paragraphs to make separate points
- start the response to each 10, 20 and 30 mark question on a new page of the answer booklet; very few candidates did this, sometimes not even leaving a gap between answers, making it difficult to work out where one answer ended and the next one began.

Section A overview

Candidates were generally aware of the significance of the two coins and of many other sources dealing with the aftermath of the civil wars and Augustus' consolidation of power. They were able to use their knowledge both in analysing the messages of the coins and how the sources portrayed how Augustus presented himself and his actions during and after he became the sole ruler of the Roman empire.

Question 1

Source A: Two coins showing Augustus

Coin 1

Denarius, obv. bare head of Octavian, rev. Pax standing left holding olive branch and cornucopia

Inscription: CAESAR DIVI F- Caesar, son of a god



Coin 2

Aureus, obv. head of Octavian, rev. Octavian seated on bench holding scroll

Inscription: IMP CAESAR DIVI F COS VI // LEGES ET IVRA P R RESTITVIT- Imperator Caesar, son of a god, consul for the sixth time // He has restored to the people of Rome their laws and their rights



1 In **Coin 1**, what does Pax represent?

[1]

The vast majority of candidates answered this question correctly.

Question 2

2 What metal is **Coin 2** made from?

[1]

Most answers were correct.

Question 3

3 In what year was **Coin 2** produced?

[1]

Although there were a large number of correct answers, there was also a significant number of candidates who did not give the correct date.

Question 4

4 Explain how the coins in **Source A** create a positive image of Augustus.

[10]

On the whole, this question was answered well by candidates. Coin 1 was dealt with better than Coin 2. The best responses were from candidates who clearly separated their points into different paragraphs, each dealing with a different aspect of how the coins showed a positive image of Augustus.

Discussion of Coin 2 was often hampered by some misunderstandings – the laurel wreath was mistaken for the civic crown, while many candidates thought that the image on the reverse of the coin showed Augustus giving the people of Rome the *Leges Iuliae*. The mistaken dating of the coins also caused some issues.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should be aware of the dates when sources, both material culture and literary, were produced. Although the main focus of this module is not memorising names and dates, candidates should be aware of the dates of the prescribed sources and key events, to answer questions like this one and to show awareness of chronology and development throughout the period in their longer responses.

Exemplar 1

Also, the reverse side's image of the Roman
personification of peace shows ~~Augustus~~ ^{Octavian's}
values. It presents him as striving ~~to~~ for peace
not war, which much of the empire and Rome
is sick of after years of ^(civil) ~~conflict~~ conflicts. Therefore,
this aligns ^{Octavian} ~~Augustus~~ with what the Roman
people want, portraying him in a positive light.

The exemplar shows good analysis of a feature of Coin 1, clearly explaining how the image of Pax produces a positive image of Augustus.

Question 5

Source B

Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars: Augustus 10–11*

Since the officials appointed to oversee Caesar's victory games were afraid of doing so, he gave the games himself, and in order to wield greater authority for his plans, he announced himself as a candidate for a tribuneship of the people, since an incumbent had died, though in theory unqualified, as he was a patrician and not yet a Senator. When Mark Antony, whom as consul that year he had counted on for support, would not even allow him the common right of transfer except on payment of a heavy bribe, he joined the optimates, the senatorial party, aware that they detested Antony, even more so because he was besieging Decimus Brutus in Mutina, and attempting to drive him from the province to which Caesar had appointed him, an appointment ratified by the Senate.

5

Acting on sundry advice, he hired assassins to murder Antony. Fearing retaliation when the plot was discovered, he spent all he could muster on raising a force of veterans to protect himself and the State. Raised to the rank of propraetor by the Senate, and placed in command of this army, he was instructed to join Hirtius and Pansa, the two new consuls, in aiding Decimus Brutus. Augustus completed the military task entrusted to him in three months, fighting two major battles. Antony claimed that Augustus took to flight in the first of these, and did not reappear till the following day, lacking his horse and cloak. But all agree that in the following encounter, Augustus not only led his troops, but played the soldier's part too when, in the midst of the fighting, he shouldered the eagle of the legion, its bearer being wounded, and carried it for some time.

10

15

Rumours spread that Augustus had engineered the fate of both Hirtius, who died fighting, and Pansa who died after battle from a wound, in order that, with Antony in flight, and the State bereft of its two consuls, he could take control of the victorious armies. The circumstances of Pansa's death, in particular, were so suspicious, that the physician involved, Glyco, was arrested on a charge of poisoning the wound. Aquilius Niger says further that Augustus himself killed Hirtius, the second consul, in the chaos of battle.

20

25

5 Who was Decimus Brutus (line 8)?

[1]

The vast majority of candidates gained the mark for this question.

Question 6

6 In what year was Mark Antony defeated at Mutina?

[1]

Although there was a large number of correct answers, there were some candidates who did not give the correct date.

Question 7

There were some good answers to this question. The clearest responses were from candidates who directly quoted from the text rather than just paraphrasing and the best responses, in terms of explanation, offered both negative and positive interpretations of the text to address the question 'explain how far Suetonius gave a negative image'. There were answers which did not look at the positive presentation of Augustus and so did not tackle the 'how effectively' aspect of the question well. Negative presentations of Augustus included his ruthlessness in eliminating rivals, his cowardice in battle and his excessive ambition. There was also good sensitivity to positive presentation of his bravery in warfare and military skills. There were some misunderstandings of the text, such as why Augustus was not eligible to stand for the post of tribune. Some candidates also thought that Augustus was fighting against the Senate at Mutina.

Question 8*

8* 'Augustus successfully presented his actions up to 27BC as ending civil war and liberating the Republic.'

Explain how far you agree with this statement.

You may use **Sources A** and/or **B** as a starting point in your answer.

[20]

Candidates were generally aware of the issues raised by the question. Most candidates included reference to Sources A and/or B on the question paper, although some chose not to mention this starting point. It should be noted that it is not mandatory for candidates to use the sources on the paper, but they can act as a 'way in' if candidates are struggling to come up with evidence and/or ideas. Many candidates identified a range of other suitable sources and were able to connect the content of the sources to arguments relating to the bringing of peace, the restoration of political rights and laws, and the presentation and praise of Augustus' victory at Actium. There was often precise reference to the content of literary sources although sometimes some candidates neglected to include the names of the poet or poem to accompany a reference. Generally, the idea of ending the civil wars and bringing peace was tackled more effectively than the liberation of the Republic. A number of candidates distinguished the success Augustus had during his reign from later sources, citing Suetonius and Tacitus as evidence that he was not very successful.

Exemplar 2

Propertius' poem 'Woman's Power' is an example of literary propaganda. Referencing the events of Actium, Propertius presents the battle as one against Cleopatra and Egypt alone - never mentioning Anthony by name. The threat that Cleopatra posed is also amplified, ~~describing~~ depicting her as "plotting the Capital and Empire's ruin" and describing her "fleeing from Rome", implying the battle was much closer to Italy than in reality, which portrays Augustus as the saviour and liberator of Rome from the Egyptians. Many other poems written about or after Actium reinforce the idea that Augustus had achieved complete peace. For instance, Horace's 'A Toast to Actium' describes the celebrations that can finally take place, opening expensive Lesbian and Caesarian wines, now that peace is assured. ~~Horace also wrote 'To Augustus', where~~ In the Aeneid, written by Virgil, a passage in Book 6 includes Augustus being pointed out by Anchises and described as the man who would end civil war and liberate Rome. Most of the poets were under the patronage of Maecenas, a friend of Augustus but not a public figure, so the literature

which supported Augustus was not obviously propaganda, making his image as a liberator and bringer of peace likely successful to the Roman people. However, the effectiveness of ~~the~~ literature is limited by its audience, as most Romans had only functional literacy.

Exemplar 2 shows good integration of sources into the discussion. The candidate has used a range of literary sources, quoting accurately from them. The quotations show how these sources successfully presented Augustus' actions up to 27BC as ending civil war and liberating the Republic, but there is also a valid counter argument presented.

Section B overview

Candidates generally had a good appreciation of the demands of the questions and were able to answer them effectively. Good use was made of a range of sources in the answers to both questions. Use of scholars ranged from citing a number of scholars with good engagement to none being mentioned.

Question 9 was by far the more popular of the two essays.

Question 9*

9* Assess how far the sources you have studied show that Augustus was able to portray himself as the perfect Roman man. **[30]**

The best answers formulated a coherent understanding of what defined a perfect Roman man which often was summarised in a focused introduction and/or conclusion. Candidates were then able to analyse relevant sources in support of their analysis of a range of qualities in the main part of the essay. candidates made full use of the different types of sources – statues, buildings, coinage and literature.

Some candidates adopted a sources-led approach analysing what a list of sources told us about Augustus, others discussed the qualities expected of an ideal Roman and referred to the sources to support their argument. Both approaches proved to be equally effective.

The best answers offered a counter-argument identifying aspects of imperfection and many found Suetonius a useful source in this respect.

Misconception



Many candidates were under the misapprehension that on the Prima Porta statue, Augustus is wearing a toga, when it is in fact a general's cloak. It is possible to argue that the cloak is draped over Augustus' arm in a way reminiscent of a toga and therefore to posit that the cloak takes on a double meaning, portraying Augustus as both general and politician. But to state outright that Augustus is wearing a toga is incorrect.

Exemplar 3

The Imperial family, with women and children, stresses how Augustus was concerned with traditional/conservative family values and bringing up his children to properly behave. Calviny argues that this image of Augustus on the Ara Pacis makes him a model for the Roman people to aspire to, leading the way to glory by showing proper virtues. Therefore, he can be seen as the perfect Roman.

The Prima Porta statue reinforces this image also. Zanker suggests that ~~the~~ Augustus' appearance is intended to convey his moral superiority - this argument is supported by the statue's resemblance to the Doryphoros type, which was seen as the embodiment of perfection. Many elements of the statue reference Augustus' achievements and thus his perfection as a military and civil leader (such as the sphinx and dolphin referencing Aetna). His athletic pose reinforces the idea that he is a leader, as someone the Romans should be looking to, and therefore the perfect Roman man they should aspire to be.

Exemplar 3 shows good integration of scholars and engagement with them. Two scholars are cited, each used to comment on a specific piece of sculpture. In both cases, the candidate has integrated the views of the scholars as evidence for the point being made.

Question 10*

10* Assess how far Augustus was successful in presenting the wars fought at the edges of the Empire as being beneficial to Rome and to individual Romans.

Justify your response with reference to the sources you have studied.

[30]

This question was generally answered well. The best answers were able to include reference to a range of Augustus' foreign wars and often supported this with reference to Suetonius and the *Res Gestae*. Some candidates treated this question as one about Augustus' wars in general rather than the edges of the empire, and devoted a lot of time to discussing campaigns such as Mutina and Philippi which were not relevant to the question. Most candidates identified peace, prosperity and wealth as the main benefits to Rome and individual Romans. The return of the Parthian standards and the addition of Egypt to the empire were cited as examples of these benefits.

Better responses had a counter-argument, mentioning Propertius and the Varian disaster. Suetonius was also used to show that however successful Augustus was in his lifetime, this did not last beyond his death.

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