

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

ANCIENT HISTORY

OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in
Ancient History

H407

For first teaching in 2017

H407/21 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 21 series overview

As in previous years, examiners have seen some excellent work across the unit with only a small number of responses showing a lack of the skills and knowledge to perform well.

Candidates, who performed well, developed a coherent analysis focused on the question by integrating the knowledge and evidence into an explanation. Better responses integrated knowledge and sources to form judgements. A good response sustains a series of judgements developed around the issues in the question. Statements or assertions unsupported by evidence and vaguely linked to the information do not provide convincing, well-supported judgements.

Very few responses did not deal with the issues; few seemed to be only vaguely aware of the prescribed sources. They were able to name an author or piece of evidence but little more.

There is still a tendency to provide generalised knowledge and assertions. Candidates do less well where assertion replaces argument. There should be an explanation of how and why the evidence is linked to the view and/or the issue in the question.

Better responses displayed secure knowledge and understanding of, at least, part of the period and the depth study. Errors were made and misconceptions arose given the constraints of an examination. Such errors are minor and do not affect the overall grading. Misattributions of evidence occur but do not generally damage the overall response. Many responses offered good or very good explanations at some point in the response but not consistently.

There were a few responses which included little or no source evidence. The majority of marks for the essays are for the use of sources and evidence. In the interpretation, support is needed to develop a substantiated argument regarding how convincing it is. A basic aim should be to support the response with evidence.

The quality of the evaluation of the evidence varies; some provide a lengthy, usually unrelated, paragraph on an author at the start or end of a response. Better responses integrate their assessment of the evidence within the explanation and judgements. It is focused on the specific piece of evidence, rather than a general view of the reliability of the author. Comparison of sources is present in better responses, where possible.

There were very few candidates who omitted a question or did not complete a response due to the time constraints.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• had a secure knowledge of the chronology of the periods in both the Period and Depth study • provided knowledge of the sources and their differing contexts • gave specific sources relevant to the terms of the question. • provided evaluation that dealt with the value of the specific information in the source • prioritised the analysis over a narrative of the period • gave a clearly organised structure leading to a well organised and well-supported conclusion.	• gave inaccurate chronology and showed confusion over the order of events • provided lack of clarity on the context and relevance of information or sources used. • gave generalised factual knowledge • used assertions instead of developed judgements based on evidence • generalised source evidence, e.g. 'according to Plutarch'. • lacked clear structure leading to unclear reasoning and unfocused narrative.

Section A overview

Question 2 was slightly more popular than Question 1. Question 1 asked candidates to consider the ways in which Tiberius' reign provided a template for the Julio-Claudians who followed. Most had good detail on all the reigns. Better responses focused on specific elements rather than narratives of reigns. This was also true of Question 2, where focus on specific women seemed to provide better responses than a narrative through all women.

Question 3 was more thematic in asking about the reactions of various groups to the Julio-Claudian period. The responses were often good to very good; some less successful responses focused on Augustus alone. Candidates are now much more willing to examine the analysis and meaning in some detail.

Question 1*

1* To what extent did the reign of Tiberius set a pattern for the future direction of the principate?

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

Most responses found areas with which they could compare Tiberius' reign with the reigns of the other emperors. These mostly, not exclusively, included the maiestas trials, the use of the Praetorians, specifically Sejanus, the lack of support socially and economically for the people of Rome, and the Imperial Cult. Better responses developed the idea of 'pattern' by dealing in detail with a few areas rather than the whole reign. Less successful responses focused on the general tenor of the reign in terms of cruelty and/or deviancy. Tiberius' retirement from Rome and, by implication, from dealing with administration featured in most responses. The relationships with the senate and ordinary people were generally linked to other aspects of his reign. Better responses examined the structure/role of the principate in relation to some of the above to determine how far Tiberius changed the principate for the future.

Responses showed good understanding of the accessions of the emperors and how they compared. Good responses tried to identify if Tiberius set a pattern in dealing with the difficult moment. Most recognised Tiberius was the first to succeed and was copying Augustus. They noted the role of the Praetorians; there was discussion of removing 'rivals' early in the case of Tiberius, Gaius and Nero. Usually, candidates assessed the relations with the senators in connection with the early days.

Better responses dealt sensibly with the evidence for a variety of issues, the maiestas trials, the level of administration, the issue of 'popularity', the provision of 'bread and circus', the financial 'miserliness', the retreat to Capri, and his view of the Imperial Cult. Most recognised the sources were not favourable to Tiberius and assessed the evidence accordingly. This varied from the short assessment that we had to be careful with the evidence, to a more detailed, specific, evaluation of the evidence. Some took Suetonius' assessment of the number of deaths or Seneca's view as fact; others were more cautious with Tacitus' assessment of the trials. There was good material on the Imperial Cult for both Tiberius and Claudius. The assessment of financial and social administration was more balanced in better responses. Some used Tacitus assessment of good administration in *Annals* 4.

Very good comparisons were made between emperors; better responses were specific in their examples, and they covered more than one reign. Excellent responses linked all the emperors in different areas providing a coherent series of judgements on the issue of 'pattern'. Less successful responses spent too long on Gaius leaving them time only to offer a sentence or two on Nero. These responses were often structured around a narrative of each reign. Gaius and Nero were limited at times to a single example, often the Fire of AD 64. Less successful responses focused only on Tiberius and Gaius.

The sources were at times confused, with Tacitus quoted for Gaius. Suetonius was frequently cited with the wrong emperor. There was a tendency with the sources to preface a narrative with 'According to Suetonius and Tacitus'. This would not work with Gaius and to some extent parts of the reigns are not covered by either Suetonius or Tacitus. More effective use included Cassius Dio, certainly on Claudius. There was also use of Pliny on aqueducts and Seneca on the trials. In general, sources were accurate and well-used in relation to the knowledge and understanding.

Misconception



Suetonius was not a senator; he was an equestrian; Suetonius' and Seneca's judgements on maiestas trials need evaluating concerning the extent and number of trials and executions.

Tacitus does not quote 'Tiberius to the Tiber'; it is quoted by Suetonius in the prescribed material.

Question 2*

2* 'The imperial women had very little influence during this period.'

How far 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]**

Better responses dealt with both aspects of the question. The general view in the sources concerning women, and imperial women in particular, was developed as part of the assessment. Less successful responses simply took what the sources said as fact. Better responses evaluated what we are told of women when making their judgements. Less successful responses took the agreement of the sources to mean they are reliable. It did not help when the historical context of each source was either not known or incorrect. Cassius Dio was stated to be contemporary, along with Suetonius (who knew Nero). Tacitus was said to have written 'under the reign of Domitian'. He wrote after Domitian died.

The range of women discussed was quite wide, although most responses did not cover the full range. The common examples were Livia (variously named), Agrippina the Younger (a number of spellings), Messalina; others used less frequently were the Julias, Agrippina the Elder, Livilla, wife of Drusus, Poppaea and Octavia. Some mentioned Gaius' sisters, notably Drusilla. There was occasional use of Cleopatra who was not a member of the Imperial family and outside the period. The most common error was to confuse the names; some confusion with their husbands also occurred. However, there was a general accuracy and often very detailed material.

Better responses focused on the sources available, rather than on a narrative of alleged actions.

Livia's influence was developed through Tacitus for the most part; the issue of the murder of Augustus with figs is in Cassius Dio, although Tacitus hints at the idea briefly. Most responses focused on the succession and her role in Tiberius' reign. Better responses evaluated what is said about her role rather than accepting it as fact. Many responses used Seneca's account of Cinna, with some assessment of how accurate it could be. It is also in a longer version in Cassius Dio. Her role in the accession, and how she orchestrated the accession, with the death of Agrippa Postumus, was mostly treated well, using all the sources. Very good responses made an immediate parallel with Agrippina and Nero (including Tacitus' parallel death of a rival in the opening of *Annals* 13).

Most responses made good work of Agrippina the Younger and Nero using the sources and comparing accounts. They dealt with her arranging Nero as heir, the sidelining of Britannicus, and the orchestrating of the accession. Better responses were more detailed on her role during the reign. They developed the decline of her influence. Less successful responses simply assumed she was in control for 5 years and that she lost influence when killed, but this showed she was influential. The work on Messalina tended to believe the account in Cassius Dio (sometimes attributed to Suetonius) of her influence over Claudius and the administration. Better responses were more critical and identified that Claudius was more in charge than the sources suggested. All knew of her plot and death, although her husband had a variety of names.

Arguments that women had little influence used the Julias (exiled), Agrippina the Elder (starved to death), and Octavia and Poppaea (both killed by Nero). Some very good responses knew more about these and could develop sound judgements on their influence. An example was Tacitus' view of Poppaea's role in the murder of Agrippina and death of Octavia.

Most candidates had good material, used in detail, to form coherent explanations, differing only in their assessments of the evidence.

Exemplar 1

Suetonius, ~~Aditus~~ negative portrayal of imperial women carries over to Claudius, describing him as a servant to his wives and freedmen and completely influenced by them. This can be seen through Messalina's (third wife) portrayal as promiscuous and bigamous which supposedly was the reason for her execution and Agrippina the younger, who pushed Nero as heir, similar to Livia. This once again could be a case of the imperial women being described as having great influence over the princeps in order to paint them as weak as a way to criticise them.

So rather than the imperial women being particularly influential and ~~and~~ cunning, it's more of the Princeps being so weak that they let a woman manipulate them.

This paragraph, Exemplar 1, illustrates good practice and some underdevelopment of ideas.

It has a clear statement of Suetonius' view of Claudius' wives, largely correct even if paraphrased. It provides a good example but lacks some details of Messalina's 'plot' and death. The reference to Agrippina and comparison with Livia is succinct but apposite, leading to a sound judgement on possible influence. This introduces a key element in the question in terms of the trustworthiness of the evidence. This develops the idea that the sources are using the stories of women to characterise the emperors. This is answering the second part of the question. However, it needs developing further with a more detailed evaluation of what the sources say. The paragraph lacks precise source material on Messalina and Agrippina with which to frame the analysis. Therefore, it does not reach the higher level of source evaluation and convincing judgements.

Question 3

3 Read the interpretation below.

The people most bitter about imperial rule were the aristocrats, who had lost the political power that had always belonged to their ancestors. The average Roman had never held more than a token share of this power and could not, therefore, grieve too deeply when the monarchy of the emperor replaced the aristocracy of the Senate. In fact, many Romans welcomed this new system of government because it brought peace, stability, and therefore prosperity. In the republican period, the fate of the common man was frequently dependent on magistrates who changed every year and who were willing to sacrifice the welfare of other people to achieve their own political and financial ambitions. In the imperial period, affairs of state were conducted by bureaucrats, not politicians; by men who had served in one office for a long time and who had no illusions of securing for themselves supreme control over the Roman world.

5

10

J-A Shelton, *As the Romans Did* (adapted)

How convincing do you find Shelton's interpretation that the majority benefitted from the Julio-Claudian system of government because it brought 'peace, stability, and therefore prosperity'?

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

Candidates have become much more attuned to the requirements of this question. There are fewer generalised assessments of the extract and many more detailed examinations of the specific issues. In some responses, there are still passages that discuss at length the value of the sources. This may be relevant in assessing the specific information used to support the candidate's analysis. However, lines of generalised evaluation of an author are not rewarded in Question 3. There are marks for knowledge and understanding, and for evaluating the interpretation.

Most responses focused almost entirely on the phrase in the question, assessing the three issues. Very good responses introduced the other points in the interpretation within the overall assessment.

The issue of the reaction of the 'aristocrats' produced mixed responses, both agreement and disagreement. Some argued that, as Cassius Dio says, the senate willingly handed over power. They also pointed to the joy at Gaius' accession and, partially, at Nero's. Others argued the willingness was forced (again as Cassius Dio says) and the joy short-lived; the existence of plots also supported this view. However, there were well-supported, coherent assessments on both sides.

There were equally well-argued and well-supported evaluations of the reactions of the ordinary Romans. Some responses were underdeveloped in citing one unstable event in the period as evidence that there was little stability. The event was either the fire of AD 64 or Gaius' assassination, the latter a short-lived disruption at best. The various wars on the frontiers were cited as lack of peace, while others argued there was no Civil War until AD 69.

The point about the merits of magistrates or bureaucrats in charge was successfully assessed. However, some candidates did not read the passage carefully; Shelton is referring to bureaucrats, when speaking of those who had no illusions of power not the emperors. Some argued that it was unconvincing because emperors did seek power. Other responses pointed to Sejanus as a counter argument. Some took issue with freedmen under Claudius. Most candidates agreed that the administration was better in the Imperial period. As always, there were generalisations on the improvement of lives, because of 'bread and circuses' without citing evidence that lives were better.

Misconception



The reference to Juvenal's 'bread and circuses' rarely includes the context: in Satire 10 Juvenal is complaining that the people, who have given up their votes, abdicated their duties and abilities to reward with honours and commands, now only want bread and circuses. It is a critique of the Imperial system and the ordinary people, just as Tacitus claims people were 'seduced' by Augustus.

Exemplar 2

Shelton's interpretation that the majority benefitted from the Julio-Claudian government is largely a convincing one. Indeed his claim that the "people most bitter about imperial rule were the aristocrats" is convincing as we are told by Suetonius and ^{Tacitus} Dio of the increasing discontent of the aristocracy. In Tacitus' *Annals* Tiberius' reign is characterised by the aristocracy's plight and discontent as the praetorian guard, and prefect Sejanus come to power, highlighting their discontent with the Julio-Claudian imperial system.

Moreover, it is important to note that our sources are overwhelmingly aristocratic and, whilst his works the details of the lives of the poor and marginalised groups hardly to be understood,

it does provide further evidence to back Shelton's claim. There is, in much of our extant literature a particular focus on the plight of the elite and the loss of power in the Senate. Indeed much of Tacitus' Annals holds a great deal of often thinly veiled bitterness towards the Julio-Claudian dynasty and the treatment of the elite, particularly the humiliation of Marcus Junius Brutus, the abuse suffered in the maiestas trials and his loss of power, as the system of centralised power to the emperor.

However, Shelton's claim that their bitterness was due to a loss of power "political power which had belonged to their ancestors" ~~was~~ is perhaps less convincing. Whilst it is true that the Senate lost much of their legislative power, it is also true that with a new system of government, many did have the opportunity to grow their status.

Augustus himself in the Res Gestae notes his reforms to the Senate, but ~~states~~ ^{they were} ~~these~~ reforms, not the ~~also~~ total destruction of the senatorial elite, a fact which Shelton perhaps fails to consider. Under Augustus many members of the Senate, and other elite ranks, particularly the quaestors, saw great rise in status. Augustus' building programme provi-

The paragraph in Exemplar 2 illustrates the focus of a precise element of the passage and a balance of argument for and against its view.

It begins by quoting accurately from the passage. There is evidence from the sources to support the statement, with a specific example of the reasons for aristocratic discontent. The issue of how accurate the evidence is for the view is introduced as part of the evaluation of the passage, not as added information on the source. The nature of the sources, it is argued, makes judgement on the reactions of various groups difficult to assess. The candidate develops the view that the sources create the impression of a bitterness, supporting it with a further precise example. Once this aspect is established, the response develops an alternative view. It argues that Shelton has overstated the bitterness. It suggests that loss of power was replaced by increased status and roles for the elite, using a reference to *Res Gestae* (which could be more detailed or specific). There could be more specific information, and it tends to generalise. However, there is coherent evaluation showing a very good understanding of the issues and the thrust of the extract.

Section B overview

Question 5 was more popular than Question 6. The range of responses in both questions was good. There were many very good assessments and some fewer effective ones. Most responses displayed a good knowledge of the period. Very few were unable to provide detailed examples. Most used a good range of sources to support their judgements and information.

The most frequent error occurred over attribution of sources. This led to evaluation of the wrong author and/or information. Less successful responses lost focus on the terms of the question. Some attempted to re-write the question to suit their own knowledge. On Question 4, most did not recognise the context of the passage as a message from Manlius to Marcius Rex. Better responses on Question 5 provided a balanced argument on the issue of 'only' regarding military action as a means of success. They also addressed the support the sources could provide. On Question 6, better responses dealt with aspects of the constitution and its workings; less successful ones focused on challenges in the shape of powerful individuals.

Question 4

4 Read the passage below.

"We call gods and men to witness, general, that we have taken up arms, not against our fatherland nor to bring danger upon others, but to protect ourselves from wrong; for we are wretched and destitute, many of us have been driven from our country by the violence and cruelty of the moneylenders, while all have lost repute and fortune. None of us has been allowed, in accordance with the usage of our forefathers, to enjoy the protection of the law and retain our personal liberty after being stripped of our possessions, such was the inhumanity of the moneylenders and the praetor. Your forefathers often took pity on the common people of Rome and relieved their distress by decrees, and not long ago, within our own memory, because of the great amount of their debt, silver was paid in copper with the general consent of the nobles. Often the commons themselves, either motivated by a desire for political power or incensed at the arrogance of the magistrates, have taken up arms and seceded from the patricians. But we ask neither for power nor for riches, the usual causes of war and quarrels among human beings, but only for freedom, which no true man gives up except with his life. We implore you and the Senate to rescue your unhappy fellow citizens, to restore the legal protection, of which the praetor's injustice has deprived us, and not force us to ask how we may sell our lives most dearly."

Sallust, *The Catiline Conspiracy* 33

How useful is this passage for our understanding of the motivation of the Catilinarian conspirators?

[12]

Some responses identified the passage as Manlius' message to Marcius Rex quite late in the conspiracy. Most thought it was a speech, although did not identify the speaker. Some claimed it was Catiline's letter to Catulus which is slightly later in the book. Others thought it was his speech to his supporters in the earlier stages of the conspiracy. A failure to identify the context did not necessarily damage the evaluation if the issues raised in the passage were addressed and supported by relevant information and/or other sources.

Most responses identified the issue of debt. Better ones supported this with reference to Cicero's speech and his list of debtors and/or Sallust's list of conspirators; some added the Sullan veterans as part of the debt issue; very good responses place this in the context of a financial crisis during the period.

Most identified the claim that they had lost the protection of the law and that the state supported the moneylenders not them; this was usually supported by the failure of Catiline to be elected to cancel debts; candidates used support from earlier in Sallust's account concerning Catiline's promises.

Some candidates did not read the passage carefully; they used the sentence 'motivated by a desire for power' to read that they did ask for power and riches, when later they say they do not want power. The references to 'freedom' and 'legal protection' as motivations were compared to suggestions in other sources where the motives were different.

Some candidates argued the passage was less useful because it omits the other motivations outlined elsewhere. These included Catiline's own desire for the consulship. They added the political desires mentioned during his speech, as well as his promises of wealth and power. Many used Sallust's list of criminals, gamblers, murderers etc to suggest this message was a smokescreen for the real motives.

There was some good evaluation of the Sallust and other sources; this avoided the generalised passage of context. Better responses assessed the message within the context of the book and Sallust's overall view of Rome at the time.

Identification as a speech led some to discuss the fabrication of speeches in general and the unreliability of this passage.

Question 5*

5* 'Politicians only gained success because of the threat of military action.'

How far do the sources support this view of political activity during this period?

You must use and analyse the ancient sources you have studied as well as your own knowledge to support your answer. **[36]**

This question was more popular than Question 6. Candidates tended to approach this by narrative of a series of events. Analysis of the link between military threats and success were present in the better, more analytical responses. Less successful ones narrated the actions of some politicians before moving on to other ways to achieve success. Often 'success' was not defined, merely assumed.

Most responses focused on Sulla, Pompey, Caesar and Octavian, as one would expect. Often responses stopped at Caesar; some missed out Caesar and jumped to Octavian. Sulla's two marches on Rome were the obvious starting point for most responses, although it was more the action than the threat. His success was to gain the dictatorship and engage in the proscriptions; some defined his success in terms of his reforms, primarily the elimination of the tribune. The accounts were mostly supported by reference to Plutarch and/or Appian in varying detail.

Responses repeated the pattern with more relevance to the issue of 'threat' concerning Pompey. Various incidents were used. Very few did not use his letter in Sallust or Plutarch to the senate as an example; some responses used the earlier threat he made to gain a triumph and the command against Sertorius. Most were aware of his threat to gain the consulship in 70 BC. Some seemed to think he used a threat of the military to gain commands in the 60s. In general, it was assumed that he was successful until his return from the east when he hit the brick wall of Cato and could not get what he wanted. Narratives of the build up to the Civil War and the period after Caesar's assassination illustrated the threat which led to success for Octavian and Caesar. Some referenced Clodius' use of violence as a kind of military threat; however, this was not developed in terms of the level of success achieved.

The majority made some effort to deal with the second part of the question by some references to source evidence. Better responses evaluated the extent to which the accounts were reliable in terms of identifying the threats and assessing the success. Less successful responses had long narratives with some reference to an author at the start or end of the narrative. Other responses revealed confusion over which author said what; some simply added a name to a paragraph, not always accurately.

Threats of military action were compared to other means to success. The commonest individual used was Cicero and rhetoric. His successes were Verres and Catiline and consulship, which he achieved without military action (although Catiline was finally defeated in battle); better responses continued to show his oratory did not always succeed in terms of opposing Clodius and Caesar, and later Antony. Less successful responses did not develop the issue enough to be convincing. Bribery was also a means to success. The examples of Caesar and the Pontifex Maximus election or the Bona Dea trial were common; however, responses did not compare the levels of success with what was militarily achieved, for higher levels.

Misconception



The First Triumvirate was not illegal, *amicitiae* were fairly normal in Roman politics.

It was stated that the senate did nothing to stop Pompey gaining two commands in the 60s; this is not entirely true. The commands were voted in the assembly via a tribune and the senate did try to stop the Lex Gabinia when it was brought for discussion but failed.

Exemplar 3

Pompey was a politician ~~which~~ with huge military power and on multiple occasions we see him using this to gain success. In Sallust we have a letter from Pompey to the senate. He threatens to march on Rome if he is not given more supplies and money. Showing he ~~can~~ exerts his army in order for things to go his way & and to intimidate the senate into obedience. Another example from Pompey's career is Caesar's consulship. ~~for~~ Plutarch tells us he fills the city with soldiers again using his military might to gain political success by intimidating the senate. As mentioned before Plutarch focuses on character and personalities and may be ~~using this~~ exaggerating in order to twist Pompey's character into what he wants it to be. However Plutarch is still a useful source as from other sources ~~mentioned~~ (like Sallust) we know that Pompey does use his ~~for~~ army and so Plutarch is likely telling the truth.

The Exemplar 3 response deals with Pompey's use of the threat of military action in the 70s and 60s BC. The account illustrates his success with the incident when he was in Spain and needed resources. His letter is referenced from Sallust's Histories. The candidate does not identify the precise context or situation of the letter. There is also no date. However, the source is accurate, and the main detail and outcome correct. No evaluation of this source is offered.

Another example of threat is provided with the reference to Pompey filling the streets with his soldiers. The context is given (Caesar's consulship) but not the date. Success is stated but not explained, it is implicit that Pompey got what he wanted. There follows a general evaluation of Plutarch with a view that Plutarch may be exaggerating (exactly what is not clear). However, Plutarch is declared reliable because other sources agree Pompey uses his army.

The candidate has tried to support the judgement on the use or threat of military action with specific evidence. This merits Level 4. The judgement is supported but not developed; the evaluation attempts to assess Plutarch but only at a general level; it does not develop the idea that his use of the army in Rome may be questionable. The candidate tries to compare sources but again lacks something specific with which to make the point convincing.

Question 6*

6* How far were the failings of the constitution responsible for the breakdown of the Republic?

You must use and analyse the ancient sources you have studied as well as your own knowledge of this period to support your answer. **[36]**

Good responses focused on the elements of the constitution that either failed or were not sufficient to prevent a breakdown. These responses examined the various parts of the constitution, the Senate, the Assemblies, the magistracies and courts. They looked at the systemic failures rather than simply where failed or added to the problems of the Republic. Better responses identified and discussed how and why the Senate could not function properly. These responses noted issues such as the factionalism, bribery and corruption, and violence and abuse of imperium which hindered the proper working of the constitution. Very good responses analysed the problems which prevented the constitution working as it should rather than its failings. Better responses had knowledge of how the constitution of Assemblies, magistrates and Senate worked.

Most responses focused on the challenges to the rule of law and Rome's institutions. The constitution was not fit for the purpose of meeting these challenges. Better responses identified the creation of a mercenary army by Marius as a key issue; they saw the use of these armies by a succession of politicians as a major cause of the breakdown. In this analysis the constitution did not have the means to meet these challenges, and in that way failed. This was exemplified by Octavian's ability to buy an army in 44 BC and acquire a consulship.

Many identified the use of bribery within the system. This was not seen as a failing but rather an abuse of the system which could not be controlled by the institutions. Successful responses illustrated the point with specific examples, such as Verres, Bona Dea trial, Caesar's elections, Pompey's attempt to get Afranius elected, and Caesar's use of bribery before the Civil War. Equally well documented was the use of violence, or the threat of it, by men such as Clodius and Milo, as well as Pompey's famous threat to use swords and shields in the Assembly. The abuse of power within the system was seen as a major issue when dealing with 'how far' it was the failings which brought about the end of the Republic. Better responses avoided the narrative of Sulla, Pompey, etc. They analysed the effect of the abuse on the working of the institutions which damaged them. Sulla's proscriptions and those of the Second Triumvirate were argued to have undermined the rule of law; the First Triumvirate took the system of amicitiae to the extreme; Pompey's illegal powers and positions made a mockery of the system. Less successful responses, having mentioned the Senate's weakness in dealing with challenges, quickly moved on to discuss any or all the reasons for the breakdown.

The sources were generally appropriate, and sometimes detailed. Plutarch, Appian and Suetonius were often confused with misattributions. Cicero's comment 'The Republic is finished' is often quoted but it was rarely explained what he meant. Clearly the Republic continued to function. Plutarch was used accurately on Sulla, Pompey and the First Triumvirate. It is still said that Plutarch lists Sulla's reform; Appian does. Suetonius and Sallust seem to be interchangeable at times. It is important when the candidate comes to evaluate a reference or quote that they are dealing with the right author.

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