

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

# ANCIENT HISTORY

OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in  
Ancient History

**H407**

For first teaching in 2017

**H407/13 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 13 series overview

Performance in this option was generally encouraging, with a good number of candidates demonstrating secure knowledge and engagement with the material. However, there was a noticeable variation in quality across questions, and several recurring issues affected the clarity and accuracy of responses.

A common concern was the misattribution of ancient sources, particularly confusion between Thucydides and Herodotus, and a lack of clarity around the terms and impact of the Megarian Decree. This was especially evident in Questions 1 and 3, where misunderstanding of Persian policy and the decree's significance weakened otherwise promising answers. Some candidates also included material outside the date range specified in the question, such as events beyond 431 BC, although this was relatively rare.

In Section A, Question 1 was the most popular and generally well handled. Strong responses addressed Persian policy thematically and used Thucydides and Plutarch effectively, with some good use of epigraphic evidence. Weaker answers tended to go out of period or confuse key sources. Question 2 was less popular but produced thoughtful responses, particularly where candidates tracked leadership and strategy, including Pericles, Cleon, Brasidas, and Archidamus. However, a few candidates lacked clarity on the Peace of Nicias, which limited their analysis.

Question 3 saw generally strong engagement with the passage, with candidates identifying both short-term and long-term tensions, including the Corinthian complaint and Spartan ultimatum. However, some responses showed uncertainty about the terms of the Megarian Decree.

In the Depth Study, Question 4 was well received, with many candidates drawing out multiple valid points from the passage and supporting them with wider knowledge, though some failed to go beyond the source provided.

Question 5 was well answered by candidates who focused on Philip's military reforms and early consolidation of Macedon. Strong responses discussed the phalanx, Sarissas, Companion Cavalry, and siege engines, as well as Philip's diplomatic strategies and relations with Athens, Olynthus, and tribal groups. Question 6 was also well answered, with candidates exploring Alexander's generalship up to 331 BC, including key battles and sieges. Many responses acknowledged Philip's foundational role in shaping the Macedonian army. Across both questions, candidates showed good awareness of source limitations, particularly with Arrian, Plutarch, Curtius, and Diodorus.

Overall, while many candidates demonstrated strong analytical skills and enthusiasm, there remains a need for greater precision in source attribution, clearer understanding of key decrees and events, and more consistent engagement with the full chronological scope of the questions.

| Candidates who did well on this paper generally:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>focused sharply on the demands of the question, using well-chosen evidence and contextual knowledge to construct a clear argument</li> <li>selected and applied sources that were directly relevant to the specific terms of the question</li> <li>showed a confident grasp of the chronological framework, ensuring events and developments were accurately placed in time</li> <li>demonstrated depth of understanding of the historical period, reflecting both breadth and precision in knowledge</li> <li>evaluated arguments by testing the credibility of the specific claims being made, rather than offering generalised source critique.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>struggled with Spartan chronology, leading to confusion over key events, figures, and their correct placement in the timeline</li> <li>focused on providing a general narrative of the period rather than addressing the specific demands of the question</li> <li>misattributed events to incorrect individuals or groups, undermining the accuracy of the argument</li> <li>offered broad, unfocused evaluations instead of assessing the specific claims or interpretations presented</li> <li>prioritised description over analysis, recounting events without exploring their significance or implications.</li> </ul> |

## Section A overview

Overall, candidates showed a good grasp of the key events across both essay periods, though there was a wider spread in performance than in previous years. Stronger responses demonstrated clear chronological awareness and used relevant evidence to support well-structured arguments. The most effective answers remained tightly focused on the terms of the question, with evaluation often precise and convincingly applied.

### Question 1\*

1\* 'The Persians were consistent in their policy and actions towards the Greek states from 492–431 BC.'

To what extent do the sources support this statement?

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 more popular of the two Section A essay questions, and responses varied widely in quality. Stronger responses demonstrated a clear understanding of the full date range (492–431 BC), with answers structured thematically around Persian policy, such as imperialism, revenge, diplomacy, and shifts toward peace. These responses often made effective use of ancient sources, particularly Herodotus and Thucydides, and showed awareness of the evolving nature of Persian-Greek relations, including the significance of the Peace of Callias.

Better answers also incorporated archaeological evidence, such as the Serpent Column and Persian inscriptions (e.g. Naqs-e Rostam), though some candidates showed uncertainty about which king commissioned which monument and what they actually stated. A few responses also referenced the Athenian offer of earth and water in 508 BC as useful background, even though it fell outside the specified date range.

Weaker responses tended to focus narrowly on the Persian Wars (492–479 BC), neglecting the later period up to 431. This limited their ability to address the question's emphasis on consistency. Some candidates confused key events or figures, such as the two Megabazoi, and misattributed actions to the wrong Persian kings. There was also confusion between peace treaties and alliances, with some claiming Athens and Persia became allies after the Peace of Callias.

Chronological imprecision was a recurring issue, with some candidates unclear about the sequence of invasions or the timeline of Persian involvement in Greek affairs. Misunderstandings about the nature of 'medizing' and the use of terms like 'alliance' further weakened some arguments.

Overall, the best responses were those that addressed the full period, used a wide range of sources critically, and evaluated the extent to which Persian actions were consistent, rather than simply descriptive.

## Exemplar 1

|  |  |                                                            |
|--|--|------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  | In the second half of the Persian Wars                     |
|  |  | under <del>the</del> Xerxes from 480-478 <sup>BC</sup> was |
|  |  | the battles of Thermopylae 480BC, Salamis                  |
|  |  | 479BC, Plataea 479BC and Mycale 479BC.                     |
|  |  | In these battles under Xerxes and then <del>the</del>      |
|  |  | Mardonius. Example of Persian policy and                   |
|  |  | actions towards the Greeks are shown                       |
|  |  | particularly in Thermopylae 480BC in Herodotus's           |
|  |  | (Hdt) histories and Aeschylus' Persians about              |
|  |  | Salamis. In Thermopylae (480BC) the                        |
|  |  | Persians were given help by a Spartan                      |
|  |  | slave on how to defeat the Spartans on                     |
|  |  | day 3 of the battle. According to Hdt                      |
|  |  | the Persians <del>but</del> asked the Spartans to          |
|  |  | "give up their weapons in which the Spartans               |
|  |  | responded "come and take them". And when                   |

The Persians ~~historically~~ ~~defeated~~ ~~gilded~~ with  
 Hubris under their new leader believed they  
 could "fly so many arrows it would cover  
 the sun". The Spartans responded how they  
 like to fight in the shade. The Persians  
 attributed to Sparta is one of superiority  
 and confidence. And even though they win  
 this battle the Greek states don't back down  
 and so ~~the~~ other battles continue. Like Salamis  
 in 479 BC. In Aeschylus Persians, the Queen  
 Atossa talks on how could the Greeks possibly  
 win if they don't have riches or a large army.  
 The messenger talks on how the Greeks are  
 monster and vicious. This shows how the  
 Persians saw the Greeks from a Greek viewpoint.  
 This play was shown just after the Persian  
 wars after Persia had burned Athens acropolis  
<sup>around</sup> in 480 BC. The battle of Salamis proves the  
 Persians still believe they are superior to the  
 Greek city states, even if they lost the battle  
 due to the Athenian naval commander The  
 Themistocles strategy. However ~~the~~ Both Aeschylus  
 and Hdt are known to "exaggerate everything"  
 (Grun) but are still reliable due to having  
 a strong truth and the ~~the~~ exaggeration be based  
 on what was told from people at the time.

Exemplar 1 shows some engagement with the question and includes relevant events, but it lacks precision and depth. There are factual inaccuracies and generalisations about Persian policy that need clarification, such as treating Persian actions as uniform across time and regions. The analysis tends to describe rather than evaluate, and it doesn't fully explore how Persian aims shifted in response to changing circumstances. Herodotus and Thucydides are not clearly referenced or critically used, which limits the strength of the argument. With clearer structure, more accurate detail, and deeper source engagement, the answer could be significantly improved.

**Misconception: Confusing the key literary historians on Persia.**

Examiners frequently note that candidates struggle to distinguish between ancient authors when discussing relations between Persia and the Greek states in the 5th century BC. This often leads to confusion over who describes what, and when. Understanding which historian covers which events and how they portray Persian involvement is essential for accurate and well-supported answers. The following guide outlines the key contributions of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon, helping clarify their respective focuses and how Persia features in their works.

Herodotus focuses on the earlier part of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, especially the Persian Wars (492–479 BC). His *Histories* cover:

- The causes of conflict between Persia and the Greek world.
- The Ionian Revolt and Persian expeditions under Darius and Xerxes.
- Key battles such as Marathon, Thermopylae, Salamis, and Plataea.
- Persian motivations, customs, and leadership, often with anecdotal detail.

Thucydides, by contrast, begins his History of the Peloponnesian War in 431 BC but does offer a narrative and assessment of the period after the Persian Wars in a part of Book 1 called the *Pentekontaetia*. His *History of the Peloponnesian War* covers:

- Persia, mainly in the context of later diplomacy and funding during the Peloponnesian War.
- Internal Greek politics and warfare, with Persia playing a more background role until later in the conflict.
- The Egyptian expedition (c.460 BC), where Athens supported a revolt against Persian rule - an example of mid-century Athenian aggression towards Persia.
- The Peace of Callias (though not named explicitly), which some believe marked a temporary resolution between Athens and Persia in the mid-5th century.

Xenophon continues the narrative after Thucydides, covering events from 411 BC onwards in his *Hellenica*. His work covers:

- The role of Persian satraps like Tissaphernes and Pharnabazus in shaping Greek interstate politics.
- Persian financial support for Sparta, especially in naval campaigns against Athens.
- The Treaty of 411 BC and subsequent negotiations involving Persia and Greek states.
- The strategic importance of Persian-controlled Asia Minor and its impact on Greek diplomacy.
- The shifting alliances between Persia, Sparta, and Athens, including Persian attempts to play Greek powers against each other.
- The actions of Cyrus the Younger and his support for Spartan commander Lysander.

In short: Herodotus is the main source for Persian-Greek conflict up to 479 BC, while Thucydides is more relevant for Persian involvement in Greek affairs from the late 5th century onwards. Xenophon is useful for understanding how Persia reasserted influence in Greek politics through diplomacy and financial support, particularly in the late 5th century.

## Question 2\*

- 2\*** How far would you agree that the Peace of Nicias of 421 BC was always the most likely outcome of the first ten years of the Peloponnesian War?

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

Although less popular than Question 1, this essay was generally well answered by those with a secure grasp of the chronology and context of the Archidamian War. Stronger responses directly addressed the key term 'always', evaluating whether peace was a consistent likelihood throughout the first decade of conflict. These candidates often explored shifts in Athenian and Spartan strategy, particularly the impact of leaders such as Pericles, Cleon, and Brasidas, and used ancient sources like Thucydides, Plutarch, and Diodorus effectively.

Better answers demonstrated nuanced understanding of Pericles' initial strategy, the consequences of the plague, and the turning points at Pylos and Sphacteria. Many also discussed the role of Spartan internal politics, such as the influence of hawks and doves, and the implications of Brasidas' campaigns in Thrace. Some candidates used Aristophanes and the Thoudippos Decree to argue that Pericles' policy was unsustainable, making peace increasingly likely.

However, weaker responses often lacked precision, with some confusing the Peace of Nicias with the Thirty Years' Peace or not understanding its terms. Chronological errors were common, including misdating events or misunderstanding the scope of 'the first ten years.' A few responses drifted into irrelevant content, such as the Argive Alliance or the Sicilian Expedition, which fall outside the question's timeframe.

There was also confusion over key details, for example, the number of Spartans captured at Sphacteria, and some candidates misrepresented figures like Brasidas or Pericles. Evaluation in weaker answers tended to be generalised, lacking focus on the specific likelihood of peace at different stages of the war.

Overall, the strongest responses were those that tracked the evolving military and political landscape, used sources critically, and maintained a clear focus on the question's central claim.

## Exemplar 2

|  |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  | <p>Indeed, Athens entered the war in 431 with a strong sense of purpose and strategy. Thucydides informs us that this strategy was largely shaped by the General Pericles who urged the Athenians not to engage the Spartans on land, to retreat inside the city walls whilst using their superior navy to raid the Peloponnesian coastlines - a strategy designed to weather Spartan annual invasions whilst gradually reducing their capacity for war. As such, the Athenian strategy of attrition in 431 is indicative of a state unlikely to sign a peace treaty within only 10 years, as they evidently had strategised for a long-term struggle. Moreover, whilst Thucydides tells us that Pericles presented this strategy as defensive, nowhere in the extant sources is Athens portrayed as at war unwillingly, with both Thucydides and Xenophon portraying Athens as eager for war, not peace. This is further evidenced by Thucydides' account of the Athenian <sup>siege</sup> interventions in Potidea, an act which the Corinthians viewed as a "direct threat" and the Peloponnesian League <sup>saw as</sup> a provocative intervention. Interventions such as these <del>are</del> are as told by Thucydides sparked Corinthian interest for</p> |
|--|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|   |           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 | continued | <p>Athens meaning that by 431, Athens was eager for war, Corinth would not accept peace and therefore, though peace may have been desirable for Sparta, the peace of Nicias was not the most likely outcome in the 430s.</p> |
|---|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

This is a strong answer because it demonstrates precise historical knowledge and applies it directly to the question. It doesn't just recount events but evaluates how factors like the death of Pericles, the rise of Cleon and Brasidas, and the strain of war shaped the conditions for peace. The answer uses Thucydides effectively, not just for narrative support but to explore his views on unpredictability and political pressure. It also avoids asserting inevitability, instead showing how peace became more likely over time. This balance of detailed evidence, thoughtful analysis, and source engagement makes the answer both convincing and well-argued.

### Question 3

#### 3 Read the interpretation below.

So the Megarian decree had economic effects, and was surely intended to. Of course the Athenians took good care not to be wrongfooted morally: hence a religious aspect was needed for the punishment of an ostensibly religious offence. ... But the Megarian decree was seen, with justification, as Athenian aggression, and Corinth, remembering the 460s, must have thought Athens was up to her old intrigues. ... It seems then that for much of the 430s war looked imminent, and to that extent Thucydides, who under-reports the earlier stirrings and expansion, should be corrected. But his general picture of Athenian expansion, forcing the Spartans to war, stands.

5

S. Hornblower, *The Greek World 479–323 BC* (adapted)

How convincing do you find Hornblower's interpretation of the Megarian decree and the reasons for the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War?

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

This interpretation question was generally well handled, with many candidates demonstrating a clear understanding of the passage and engaging directly with Hornblower's argument. Stronger responses focused on the key points raised in the extract, particularly the Megarian Decree, its economic and moral implications, and the broader context of rising tensions in the 430s, and assessed how convincingly these were presented using detailed knowledge and relevant ancient sources.

The best answers structured their responses around specific claims in the passage, using Thucydides, Plutarch, and Aristophanes to support or challenge Hornblower's interpretation. These candidates often explored the idea of Athenian provocation, the strategic use of the decree, and the role of Corinth and Sparta in escalating hostilities. Many also recognised the reference to Thucydides 1.23 and discussed the 'earlier stirrings' of conflict in the 460s, including Megara's shifting alliances and Athens' growing assertiveness.

Weaker responses tended to either ignore the passage or engage with it only superficially. Some candidates provided general essays on the causes of the Peloponnesian War or the Megarian Decree without linking their points back to Hornblower's interpretation. Others confused the Megarian Decree with unrelated decrees or lacked a clear understanding of its terms and significance.

There was also some chronological confusion, particularly around the events of the 460s and 430s, and a few candidates misunderstood key phrases in the passage, such as 'justification' or 'under-reporting.' Evaluation in weaker responses was often vague or generic, lacking precise engagement with the specific arguments presented.

Overall, the most successful answers were those that remained focused on the question of how convincing Hornblower's interpretation was, using detailed knowledge and source analysis to reach well-supported conclusions.

## Section B overview

Performance in Section B was generally positive, with candidates showing good engagement across the three questions. Question 4, a source-based question, was well received, with many candidates drawing out multiple valid points and supporting them with wider contextual knowledge. However, some responses failed to go beyond the passage, limiting their analysis.

Question 5 was answered confidently by candidates who focused on Philip II's early reforms and consolidation of Macedon. Strong responses discussed military innovations such as the phalanx and sarissa, as well as diplomatic strategies and territorial expansion. Source evaluation was generally well handled.

Question 6 was popular and produced strong responses, with candidates exploring Alexander's generalship up to 331 BC. Key battles and sieges were well covered, and many candidates acknowledged Philip's foundational role in shaping the Macedonian army. Source awareness was again a strength, with thoughtful engagement with Arrian, Plutarch, Curtius, and Diodorus.

### Question 4

4 Read the passage below.

**Passage: Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 16.89, pp 85-87, has been removed due to third party copyright restrictions.**

How useful is this passage for our understanding of Philip's ambition?

**[12]**

Question 4 was generally well received and allowed candidates to engage meaningfully with the source material. The passage selected offered multiple avenues for analysis, particularly in relation to Philip II's ambition, militarily, politically, and diplomatically. Strong responses demonstrated a clear understanding of the question's focus on *usefulness*, rather than simply describing Philip's actions. These candidates evaluated the passage critically, considering both what it reveals about Philip's aims and what it omits, and supported their analysis with wider contextual knowledge and additional sources.

The best answers integrated discussion of Philip's military reforms, territorial expansion, and diplomatic strategies, linking these to broader ambitions such as pan-Hellenic leadership or dominance over Greece. Candidates who referenced other sources, such as Demosthenes' speeches, epigraphic evidence, or accounts of Philip's involvement in the Sacred War, were able to assess the passage's reliability and limitations more effectively.

However, weaker responses tended to remain within the bounds of the passage, summarising its content without evaluating its usefulness or comparing it to other evidence. These answers often lacked wider knowledge and did not address the question's analytical demands. Some candidates also struggled to distinguish between ambition and achievement, leading to descriptive rather than evaluative responses.

Overall, Question 4 provided a good opportunity for source-based analysis, but performance varied depending on candidates' ability to engage critically with the passage and contextualise it within Philip's broader political and military objectives.

## Question 5\*

- 5\*** 'Philip's reorganisation of the Macedonian army upon his accession was the most important reason for his success.'

To what extent do you 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]**

Question 5 focused on Philip II's early reign and his efforts to consolidate and strengthen Macedon. Most candidates responded well to the 'early years' aspect of the question, with stronger answers demonstrating a clear understanding of Philip's military reforms and their strategic importance. These included the development of the Macedonian phalanx, the introduction of the sarissa (long spear), the use of Companion Cavalry, and the deployment of siege engines. Candidates who linked these innovations to Philip's broader aims, such as securing borders, asserting dominance over rival claimants, and preparing for expansion, produced the most effective responses.

In addition to military developments, successful answers also explored Philip's diplomatic and political strategies. These included his use of marriage alliances, his handling of tribal relations with Illyria and Paeonia, and his calculated interventions in Greek affairs, such as his involvement in the Sacred War. The seizure of key locations like Amphipolis and Crenides (later Philippi) was also well covered, especially when candidates linked control of these areas to economic and strategic advantages.

Weaker responses tended to list reforms or events without analysing their significance or linking them to the broader theme of consolidation. Some candidates focused too heavily on later events or did not distinguish between Philip's early and later policies. A few responses lacked depth in their treatment of sources, though overall, source engagement was a relative strength in this question. Many candidates showed awareness of the limitations of available evidence and made thoughtful use of authors such as Demosthenes, Diodorus, and Plutarch.

Overall, Question 5 allowed candidates to demonstrate both factual knowledge and analytical skill. The best responses were those that combined detailed understanding of Philip's reforms with a clear explanation of how these measures contributed to the stability and strength of Macedon in the early years of his reign.

### Assessment for learning: Moving from Narrative to Analysis



A key concern raised by the examiners for Question 5 was the tendency of some candidates to produce narrative summaries rather than analytical responses. While many students demonstrated sound knowledge of Philip II's military reforms, these were often listed without explanation of their strategic significance. For example, stronger responses linked these reforms to Philip's broader aims of securing Macedon, asserting dominance over rival claimants, and preparing for expansion. In contrast, weaker answers simply described events or reforms without evaluating their impact.

To address this, teachers should encourage students to use thematic structuring such as military, diplomatic, and economic consolidation and apply the 'So what?' technique after each point to prompt analysis. For instance, rather than stating 'Philip seized Crenides,' students should be guided to explain how controlling the gold mines at Philippi strengthened Macedon's economy and funded further campaigns.

Also, integrating source material can help students move beyond description and engage critically with the historical context. By modelling analytical writing and using targeted questioning, teachers can help students develop responses that are evaluative, focused, and better aligned with the demands of the mark scheme.

## Question 6\*

- 6\*** How far do you agree that up to and including the Battle of Gaugamela (331 BC), Alexander's successes were based on his skill as a general?

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

Question 6 was a popular choice and generally produced good responses. Most candidates demonstrated a solid understanding of Alexander's military campaigns up to 331 BC, with frequent references to key battles such as Granicus, Issus, and Gaugamela, as well as the sieges of Tyre and Halicarnassus. These events were often used effectively to support arguments about Alexander's abilities as a general.

Stronger responses went beyond narrative description and offered analytical insight into Alexander's strategic thinking, adaptability, and leadership qualities. Many candidates also acknowledged the foundational role of Philip II in shaping the Macedonian army, which added depth to their evaluation of Alexander's success. This comparative approach helped candidates demonstrate a more nuanced understanding of continuity and innovation in Macedonian military leadership.

Source evaluation was a relative strength in this question. Candidates frequently engaged with the limitations and perspectives of key authors such as Arrian, Plutarch, Curtius, and Diodorus. Strong responses considered issues such as bias, retrospective interpretation, and the reliability of different accounts, which enhanced the quality of analysis.

Weaker responses tended to be more descriptive, focusing on recounting events without linking them clearly to the question's focus on Alexander's generalship. A small number of candidates went beyond the date range, discussing events after 331 BC, which limited the relevance of their arguments.

Overall, Question 6 allowed candidates to showcase both factual knowledge and evaluative skill. The best answers combined detailed military history with critical engagement with sources and a clear focus on the question's analytical demands.

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