

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

ANCIENT HISTORY

H407

For first teaching in 2017

H407/12 Summer 2019 series

Version 1

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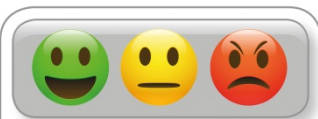
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Introduction

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. 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 can be downloaded from OCR.

Paper 12 series overview

This series was the first of the new specification and, on the whole, the examiners were impressed with the candidates' engagement with the questions. Question 3 was new to Ancient History A Level and all centres must be praised for the way they have prepared their candidates to deal with the assessment of a modern interpretation. The examiners commented on how impressed they were with the level of engagement of the key issues implicit in the modern interpretation and the credibility of the responses from the candidates themselves.

The overall message is the assessment objectives are heavily weighted towards using, analysing and evaluating ancient source material. Answers which give a broad narrative or offer unsubstantiated statements such as 'the sources show that...' are unlikely to achieve marks in AO3 beyond the lower two bands.

The vast majority of candidates coped well with the time constraints with very few examples seen of candidates demonstrably running out of time.

Section A overview

Overall candidates showed a good understanding of the main events in the period 492–404 BC. Responses both in the essay questions and the modern interpretation made good use of the evidence to reach convincing conclusions. The better responses stuck to the precise terms of the question; the evaluation of the evidence used was often convincing and pertinent.

To repeat the advice from the previous specification: evaluation of the sources must be specific to the point being made. There was still far too much generic evaluation bolted on at the end of an essay, which, quite reasonably, received very little credit.

Question 1

Section A: Relations between Greek states and between Greek and non-Greek states, 492–404 BC

- 1* 'Athens' allies quickly learned that Athenians always tried to dominate the Greek world.' To what extent do the sources support this view?

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

Very few candidates managed to deal with both 'quickly' and 'always'. These words require a sound understanding of the chronology of the period and the best answers clearly recognised that there was a difference pre and post 478. Overall, candidates interpreted the word 'allies' to mean members of the Delian League; no-one argued about whether Athens ever wanted to dominate Sparta. The various revolts of member states were well discussed as well as methods used by Athens to control the League members. The various decrees were used with a varying degree of success. Athens' potential motives in establishing an Empire were analysed well but the main weakness of the responses to this question was presenting evidence from a narrow time range. The vast majority of responses dealt only with Athens post 478 and too many answers were restricted to only 478–431. Candidates should be reminded that questions without a specific date range refer to the whole period. Very few candidates explored the source value of examining what the "allies realised" and instead gave their own interpretation of the motives for Athenian domination as put forward by Thucydides.

Question 2

- 2* How far did the Peace of 446 BC address the challenges of the First Peloponnesian War (462–446 BC)?

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

Fewer than 10% of candidates chose to attempt this question. For those who did the responses were polarised with those who had a secure understanding of both the challenges of the First Peloponnesian War and the precise terms of the Peace of 446 and were able to discuss the extent to which the Peace was successful in its aims, receiving marks in the highest bands. The less successful answers showed little understanding of the details of the treaty and occasionally mixed it up with the Peace of Nicias. The various treaties of the period are important, and their details should be known to candidates precisely.

Question 3

3 Read the interpretation below.

How convincing do you find R. Meiggs' interpretation of Sparta's position at the start of the Peloponnesian War?

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

This question requires candidates to engage with the interpretation in front of them and, overall, this was done well. There is no expected answer and candidates are free to agree or disagree with all or part of the modern interpretation. There is no need for candidates to look to try to support their judgements with the ideas of other modern interpretations as some responses looked to contrast the views by Meiggs with other authors. The better responses looked at several of Meigg's claims and discussed their credibility by using their own knowledge of the period derived from the accounts of the ancient authors.

Responses occasionally provided evidence against Meiggs (e.g. the lack of support or lack of navy) by referring to an incident in the later part of the War such as the Brasidas campaign or the victories of Lysander). This shows a misconception in that the question clearly refers to Sparta's position 'at the start of' the War and he references events before the War or at the beginning. Better responses clearly knew the period between 446 and 432 and the events and stuck to the claims in the passage.

Exemplar 1

Meiggs accurately claims that the Spartans stated that the Athenians could avoid war in 431 BC by giving their allies freedom. However, the allies could not trust in the Spartans. His argument that Sparta failed to support the Samian Revolt and that they were militarily helpless is less convincing.

Meiggs' assertion that the Spartans' final condition to the Athenians to avoid war was that "the Athenians let the Greeks go free" is supported by ~~Herodotus~~ Thucydides 1.139. Sparta did tell Athens to "give the Hellenes their freedom" and this was clearly unrealistic. Thucydides probably witnessed the Spartan delegation to Athens and so is likely reliable in conveying Sparta's terms. They wanted Athens to get rid of Pericles, revoke the Megarian decree and dismantle their empire. Athens would never have accepted such harsh terms because they relied on their empire's tribute to maintain

their navy. It was however a useful angle for the Spartans to claim to be the "liberators of Hellas" as Thucydides 2.8 claims they did.

Meiggs claim that "the allies had no grounds for confidence in their liberators" however seems somewhat exaggerated. Meiggs justifies this by arguing that the Spartans "failed to support the Samian revolt" of 440BC. However, he fails to acknowledge that the Spartans did in fact vote to go to war with Athens over this very issue. Thucydides 1.40 states that at the debate at Corcyra in 433BC, the Corinthians say to the Athenians "at the time when Samos revolted we ~~openly~~ openly sided with you!". Because of the bicameral nature of the Peloponnesian League, this means that the Spartans voted to go to war against the Athenians. Thus, the Spartans actively supported the Samian Revolt, but were blocked by their powerful ally Corinth.

However, I do agree with Meiggs that the democracies in the Pelian League would not "relish liberation by Spartans who maintained their leadership of the Peloponnesian League by encouraging oligarchies". The Old Oligarch, writing around the 420s BC claims that the Athenians encouraged democratic governments in their subject

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to the allies. The allies were also not necessarily ~~even~~ "inaccessible" to Sparta as Brasidas liberated Athenian allies as far north as Thrace in 424. He had said to Acanthus "make it your aim to be the first" to be liberated from Athens. Thus, I disagree that the Spartans could not liberate the allies because they could not access them. The allies surely would have acknowledged that.

In conclusion, I ultimately think that Meiggs puts too much emphasis on the opinion of the allies that Sparta would not be able to liberate them from Athens. It was ultimately not up to the allies whether or not to accept Sparta's terms, who were much more aggressive ~~for~~ and threatening to Athens than Meiggs makes out.

This response received 20/20. This shows how the modern interpretation question could be tackled. There is clear engagement with the extract by the candidate and the points made by Meiggs are broken down and discussed convincingly. The candidate's own views on the modern interpretation are supported by reference to the candidate's own knowledge and the ancient source material. There is a good understanding of the period and the chronology.

Section B overview

Section B is the 'Depth Study' and accordingly examiners expect more detailed understanding in these responses than perhaps the larger and more open Period Study. The essay questions were both equally popular and the better answers engaged fully with the precise terms of the question.

There were actually few examples of Level 6 answers for Question 4 with a large number of candidates treating the question as 'what does this passage tell us...' rather than 'how useful...'. It is important that the passage(s)/source(s) are mined for relevant information but that there is also some analysis of source utility.

Question 4

Section B: The Culture and Politics of Athens, c.460–c.399 BC

- 4 Read the passages below.

How useful are these passages for understanding the importance of rhetoric for political leaders in Athens? [12]

The context of both passages was mostly identified, only occasionally was the Thucydides 3.38 referred to as a speech against Cleon, or not pinpointed as the Mytileneian debate. Good responses identified the Assembly and/or the courts as a vital part of the democracy and so the need for good skill at speeches. Good points were made on the basis of Thucydides 1.22 and his statement on how he recorded the speeches, evaluating the text as partly him and partly Cleon. This was developed to show that the view may well be Thucydides' opinion of rhetoric given his attitude to democracy and the *demos*.

Response consisting of a general evaluation of the passages without reference to the text in detail is "limited", arguing that the passage is useful or not because the author is reliable or not is partial at best. Long quotes from the text followed by a re-stating of what it means for the implication of the use of rhetoric is acceptable up to a point but needs supporting knowledge to develop the usefulness, e.g. the emphasis on rhetoric in Plato's *Gorgias*, the influence of Gorgias, the view taken in the *Apology*.

Exemplar 2

4	<p>Thucydides and Aristophanes give their respective accounts on the effect of rhetoric on the assembly and the use of rhetoric for political leaders in Athens. In Aristophanes' <i>The Knights</i>, the ^{humour} point and political ^{point} message comes from the reversal of expectations. The low ones: birth and intelligence, the higher chance of success in the assembly. There is no need to rule well, so Demosthenes assures the sausage-seller in our passage: 'Mix all their affairs into a hash, and always try to win the people over with little touches of elegantly prepared rhetoric!' Here the effect of rhetoric is used as a criticism of democracy. Similarly, Thucydides comments on the effect of Rhetoric on the assembly: '[The people] are the slaves of every paradox that comes their way!' Both authors argue that the effect of rhetoric was monumental and ^{hence} imperative for any leader. Given that rhetoric was the main instrument of late fifth century Sophistry, it is useful to frame the question of irregularity within the parameters of the intellectual revolution of the fifth century.</p> <p>No where is the effect of rhetoric more important than in our passage of the Mytilene debate. Thucydides, drawing his recollection of</p>
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Cleon's just rebuttal to Diodotus: seen here, talks about the greatly negative impact of 'elaborate speeches' that distance the audience from the truth. Aristotle would later describe this as a 'moral chaos'. However, Thucydides and Aristophanes are often seen as portraying the conservative elements of society more sympathetically. As a result, one must take caution when assessing the usefulness of said authors. Moreover, as a comic playwright, Aristophanes is playing for laughs and as a result will use any literary device available to him to achieve this goal, including distortion and omission. With this being said, ~~the~~ satire is only successful if it is grounded in reality. Therefore, the previous constraints on the sources' usefulness are mitigated.

It is useful to distinguish here between the philosophically driven opposition to rhetoric - that of Plato, Aristotle and Socrates - and the political opposition we see here in Thucydides and Aristotle. This allows us to visualise the two-pronged attack on sophistry and rhetoric that took place during the late fifth century. These passages are

		therefore primarily useful for the critique they offer of democracy; namely the use of rhetoric by political leaders and the effect this had on the public. Despite the aforementioned problems with using Thucydides and Aristophanes as a source and their mutual aristocratic backgrounds, the sources are particularly useful for this end. Especially when we consider the mutually supportive evidence from our other sources.
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This response received 12/12. Both passages are mined for 'importance' of rhetoric for political leaders and there is good discussion of the reliability of Thucydides and Aristophanes as well as a good discussion of 'importance' outside of the printed extracts. 'Useful' is discussed well and an overall convincing conclusion to the specific question is reached.

Question 5

- 5* To what extent do the sources enable us to assess the role and significance of Athena and Poseidon in Athens in this period?

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

The pediments of the Parthenon (sometimes referred to as the 'frieze'), the Panathenaic frieze, the statue of Athena (gold, ivory omitted), Athena Promachos, Athene Nike, Sounion were cited as evidence and used to good effect in arguing 'significance'; the Erechtheion was used but often only to mention the olive tree and the spring; the major issue was with the details of these references.

Pausanias was often cited for information. Thucydides' Funeral Oration was cited because it does not mention religion or the gods, and so shows that Athena and Poseidon were not significant. Discussion of festivals were often omitted even when explaining the frieze on the Parthenon displays the Panatheneia.

Question 6

- 6* 'So in what was in name a democracy, power was really in the hands of the first citizen.' How far do you agree with this assessment of Pericles?

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

There was surprisingly a lack of information on the career of Pericles. Most responses chose to discuss democracy in general with reference to other politicians and thus did not answer the specific question.

Responses often put forward an argument on the value of democracy and excluded discussion of Pericles. For those who did mention Pericles, specific details were not presented too often. It was occasionally mentioned that he was general for 15 years, and that he was fined and removed from office and there was some basic material on his reforms in the 450s.

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Section A, Question 3 – R Meiggs, 'The Athenian Empire', p306, Oxford University Press, 1975.
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