

## **A LEVEL**

*Examiners' report*

# ***ANCIENT HISTORY***

**H407**


For first teaching in 2017

## **H407/13 Summer 2019 series**

Version 1

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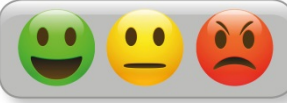
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## Introduction

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 13 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 Assessment Objective 3 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]**

Less 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 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



allies to undermine the oligarchic elite (Constitution of the Athenians 1.14-20). Thus, the democratic allies of Athens would not want to have to undergo a change in government as they were used to democracy being promoted.

Meiggs also highlights how Spartan liberation would be unattractive to Athenian allies who recognised the naval weakness of Sparta. It is true that Athens' navy was more powerful. Thucydides 2.65 records that Pericles stated that "Athens would be victorious if she bided her time and took care of her navy" as it was superior. Thucydides would probably have witnessed Pericles' speech himself and so his reflection of Pericles' policy is likely to be generally accurate even if the precise words used are not.

Although ~~Although~~ Athens had a stronger navy, Meiggs' claim that allies "realised Sparta's military helplessness" is unconvincing. Sparta had a powerful ally in Corinth who also had a large fleet and so was not utterly helpless at sea. Moreover, Sparta was widely recognised as the military super-power in Greece who, according to Herodotus 9.71 and the Serpent Column at Delphi, had decisively defeated the Persians at Plataea. Sparta had a strong land army and so would not have appeared helpless

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 Rise of Macedon, c.359–323 BC

- 4 Read the passage below.

How useful is this passage for our understanding of why Alexander was successful as a military leader? [12]

Most candidates managed to mine the extract to good effect citing many aspects of what the passage shows us about Alexander as a military leader including his bravery, tactics, rashness and ability to motivate his men.

Oddly some responses made no use of the extract at all and instead discussed 'successful as a military leader' from their own knowledge and other sources. Needless to say, candidates should make use of any stimulus printed on the question paper – it is there for a reason!

'Usefulness' was discussed well both in analysing the extract on the paper and the reliability of Arrian including where he could have got his information from. Other sources which comment on Alexander as a 'successful military leader' were used with a varying degree of success to discuss the utility of the passage cited.

### Question 5

- 5\* 'Philip was only interested in gaining glory for himself.' 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]

This question was answered well by the vast majority of candidates who attempted it. There was good evidence used from the sources from throughout Philip's career showing that he was not 'only' interested in glory with other rational motives put forward such as securing the borders and dealing with threats. His reforms of the army, campaigns in Thrace and against the Thebans and Athenians were used as evidence for Philip furthering his own glory.

The better responses supported their line of argumentation with clear and specific references to the source material which was analysed to reach convincing conclusions.

## Question 6

- 6\* 'Alexander became increasingly ruthless in his attitude towards others.' How far 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. **[36]**

This was a popular question with slightly more than half of the candidates opting for it over Question 5. The main weakness was that responses became too narrative with many merely giving a plotted account of Alexander's campaigns with some attempt, often underdeveloped, to interpret his actions as either ruthless or not. The idea of 'increasing' was dealt with well by those answers in the highest levels, where candidates were able to argue that Alexander did or did not become increasingly ruthless using sensible examples such as his treatment of Philotas, Parmenio, Cleitus and the Branchidae contrasted with examples of his clemency.

Like Question 5, the better responses looked to support their line of argument with clear support from the literary sources which were detailed and evaluated to reach convincing conclusions. Generic evaluation and a narrative approach were the main pitfalls which caused responses to be graded in the lower levels.

## Exemplar 2

Alexander had to deal with many threats and challenges throughout his campaigns, and his responses to these became increasingly ruthless as his campaign went on.

Alexander did show, at times, leniency and fairness in his attitude towards others. An example of this is his treatment of Darius' family after their ~~but~~ capture at the Battle of Issus, as shown by Arrian, who tells us that a servant reports to Darius that "Alexander has been the model of dignity and respect." This shows Alexander with a kind attitude towards others during his initial campaign against Persia. However, Arrian's reliability on this matter must be challenged, as he then says that as a result of this news, Darius prayed that if he was to lose his kingdom, that it should go to



Alexander, which seems apochryphal, and thus casts an aspect of doubt on Arrian's report of the event. However, we also see evidence of kindness and leniency later on during his campaign in India, as after he defeated Porus at the Battle of Hyphasis, Plutarch tells us that he asked Porus "How do you wish to be treated?" Porus replied "as a King" and then Alexander kept him as a King even expanding his lands. This shows that a kind and lenient aspect of Alexander remained throughout his campaign.

However, there are many examples of Alexander's ruthlessness, many of which come later in his campaigns, after ~~the~~ his capture of Persepolis, suggesting that Alexander did become increasingly ruthless. An example of this is his treatment of Bessus, who had betrayed and killed Darius. Arrian tells us that he had "his ear lobes removed, and was sent to Persepolis to be executed in front of the Persian

nobles, at which Arrian notes his displeasure, not approving of this ruthless cruelty. Another example of this is his treatment of the city of Persepolis itself, of which Curtius Rufus tells us "he got up, drunk, and burned a city that he had spared while under arms", showing his ruthless nature, which was exacerbated by his heavy drinking. We must be wary of Curtius Rufus' criticisms of Alexander, as he was writing as part of the Roman Vulgate tradition, being very critical of Alexander, comparing him to Nero, and thus being overly critical. However, in this case he is valuable as his is ~~corroborated~~ corroborated by Arrian, who also registers his distaste for this action.

Furthermore, there are an increasing number of incidences of his ruthless nature as his expedition went beyond Persepolis, into further into Asia. An example of this is the destruction of the Branchidae, whose ancestors had betrayed another Greek state,

and so he allowed those Greeks to decide the fate of the Branchidae, and when they opted to kill them, he carried this out. Curtius Rufus highlights his ruthlessness in this matter, saying that "not even common language and heritage, nor the entreaties of the supplicants, could curb the savagery." This ruthlessness is further shown by his treatment of ~~the~~ local Indian philosophers, who Plutarch tells us he had killed for speaking against him. Plutarch is a valuable source for such anecdotes, as he believed that a single anecdote could tell



you more about a man than a thousand deeds or battles. Alexander's ruthless nature is also shown by his treatment of his troops after they had mutinied at Opis, by taking the harshest route possible back, through the Gedrosian desert, which Arrian tells us led to many dying of exhaustion and thirst. However, Arrian highlights his kindness with an anecdote pouring away water that was offered to him, which apparently "had the effect of quenching the thirst of every man". This journey instead shows his ruthlessness, as some historians have suggested that it was intended as a punishment on his army for ~~mutiny~~ their mutinies. ~~This~~ However, Arrian is largely reliable as a source in most instances, as he used the works of Ptolemy and Aristobulus as his main ~~guide~~ sources, generals in Alexander's army who were both present. These examples certainly show that Alexander became more ruthless as time went on, as these instances of cruelty come

more closely packed together.

However, that is not to say that Alexander was not cruel early in his campaigns. After the Battle of the Granicus River, Arrian tells us that he has captured Greek mercenaries sent to work as slaves in pits in Macedonia, a fate arguably worse than a quick death "because they ~~were~~ had betrayed Hella's". Furthermore, his drunken ruthlessness is shown by ~~his~~ the drunken death of Cleitus, which Arrian criticises both Alexander and Cleitus for, but for which Plutarch blames solely Cleitus for his criticisms against Alexander, suggesting that Alexander's ruthlessness may not have been the driving factor. Nevertheless, it shows that Alexander did show ruthless characteristics ~~from~~ from early on in his campaign.

Overall, from the evidence we have available from the sources, it is clear that although he did show some examples of kindness and leniency throughout, and

Some examples of ruthlessness from the beginning, it is clear by the weight of examples of this nature from later in his campaigns, that he did become increasingly ruthless in his attitude towards others. However, it is difficult to make judgements on his character from the few ancient sources we have available, as we are reliant on the authors' presentation and interpretation of his character.

An essay which deals with the specific terms of the question including the idea of 'increasingly'. Examples of Alexander's ruthlessness are well chosen and relevant. Judgements are supported by close reference to the sources which are analysed and evaluated to reach convincing conclusions. The arguments presented are developed and balanced.

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