

**A LEVEL**

**Examiners' report**

# **ANCIENT HISTORY**

**H407**

For first teaching in 2017

**H407/13 Summer 2022 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 answers 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 OCR.

### Advance Information for Summer 2022 assessments

To support student revision, advance information was published about the focus of exams for Summer 2022 assessments. Advance information was available for most GCSE, AS and A Level subjects, Core Maths, FSMQ, and Cambridge Nationals Information Technologies. You can find more information on our [website](#).

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## Paper 13 series overview

The first summer series since 2019 produced some excellent exam scripts with the most successful responses showing the right blend of analysis, factual detail and support from the sources. Each question provided a challenge and, overall, the challenge was met.

The period 478-446 BC was less well known than 446-431; knowledge of 460-446 was low in some responses. Dates were hit and miss for such examples as Naxos, Thasos and events of the First Peloponnesian War, but there seemed to be a better grasp of the material on the 430s and 420s.

The period 413-404 BC was generally well-known, at least as far as key events were mentioned, such as battles and the role of individuals; less clear were the details of the events shortly after Sicily and there was confusion about the dealings with Persia during the latter years of the War.

There was some good engagement with the modern interpretation, but candidates should remember that they are expected to engage with the claims made in the extract based on how convincing the interpretation is, rather than basing their response on how far the ancient sources support the factual claims made.

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 in the time available with very few examples seen of candidates demonstrably running out of time.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• had a secure knowledge of the period studied</li> <li>• had a precise and clear grasp of the chronology</li> <li>• selected sources focused on the specific terms of the question</li> <li>• prioritised the explanation in response to the terms of the question, using evidence and knowledge in support</li> <li>• demonstrated evaluation focused on the reliability of the specific point being made.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attributed an event incorrectly to a person/group</li> <li>• did not focus on the main issue of the question but offered a generalised account of the period</li> <li>• provided a narrative of events, not an analysis</li> <li>• offered generic evaluation.</li> </ul>

## 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 more successful 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 series: evaluation of the sources must be specific to the point being made.

### Question 1\*

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

- 1\* To what extent do you think fear of Persia dominated the relationships between Greek states during the period 478 to 446 BC?

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

This was significantly the less popular of the two optional questions but responses to which still achieved marks in the highest levels. Largely the responses stuck to the prescribed dates with only a few responses focusing their analysis on the Persian or Peloponnesian Wars.

Answers focused on fear of Persia until Thasos (465 BC) or Ithome (462 BC) and then responses tended to focus on Athens' imperialism - Egypt and Cyprus were largely ignored so that the analysis was limited even until 449.

There was some good understanding of the problems with the Peace of Callias, but less clear was any discussion regarding the likelihood of a Peace with such little evidence. The importance of the 30 Years Peace 446 was generally not dealt with as evidence of the change in relations. A common error or misunderstanding was the issue of the Long Wall built in 450s, often confused with the city walls built by Themistocles in 470s, especially when the argument then developed into a discussion of the importance of Peiraeus over Sparta's annoyance.

In addition, the most successful responses looked at specific events after the Persian War which showed fear/apprehension from the Greeks towards the Persians, such as the actions led by the Athenians in places such as Egypt. These responses also then considered the changing relationship with Athens and the rest of the Greeks to good effect, often arguing that while initially, the Greeks were fearful of the Persians, the growth of Athenian power very quickly came to dominate the relationships between Greek states.

More successful responses were closely focused on the ancient source material, which helped to support and develop responses. Less successful responses were not able to give specific examples to show how relationships developed after the Persian War but instead gave a general sense that Athens' power was more of an issue.

### Avoid generic evaluation

Candidates seem well aware that for marks in the highest levels there must be an evaluation of what the sources tell us. Considerations such as genre, date, motives of bias, hostility or favour, whether primary or secondary information are all relevant discussion points when evaluating, but what is put forward needs to be more than generic.

Evaluation should be focused on the specific point being made and credible reasons offered why this particular information from the source should be treated with some caution. It is not enough to quote Aristophanes and then state that as a comic poet his words are exaggerated, or state that Plutarch is unreliable because he is writing centuries after the events about which he is writing.

### Question 2\*

2\* 'Thucydides was essentially correct that it was the growth of Athenian power which led to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War in 431 BC.' To what extent do you agree with this view?

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

This question was attempted by the vast majority of candidates. Answers were often very focused on the precise terms of the question, with the reference by Thucydides seemingly well known.

Almost all responses used information from the Corcyra, Potidaea, and Megara issues but with varying levels of success. More successful responses moved outside the 430s and developed an argument based on the breakdowns of the relationship in the 470s-60s for Sparta's attitude to Athens. These responses showed an understanding of the whole period as far as 431 and the inter-state relations, placing the immediate causes in a context.

Megara: it is commonly stated that Pericles thought it a trifle - he does not. In his speech he says 'Let none of you think that we should be going to war for a trifle if we refuse to revoke the Megarian decree. It is a point they make much of...'

Evaluation of Aristophanes was not always convincing, e.g. 'there must be some truth for it to be funny' – very rarely did candidates ever explain which part of the prostitute story is based in truth.

Plutarch was often used to support Thucydides, ignoring that he was probably using Thucydides.

The most successful responses gave a good range of examples in the build up to war in 431BC, with the very strongest going back to the First Peloponnesian War and the inter-war period to demonstrate a pattern of behaviour by Athens which would have caused conflict with Sparta and other Greek states. Again, more successful responses used a range of source material to support their arguments, and the coverage of Corinth pushing for conflict was often a well explained point. Less successful responses tried to focus on the events leading to 431BC, but this was often quite vague or focused on a few examples – primarily Megara. Less successful responses did not contain a great deal of evidence from sources.

Many responses tended to give a good level of detail and examples, but did not fully explain why these events would lead to the outbreak of conflict, leaving this implicit in their response. This meant that these responses were unable to get into Level 5 of the mark scheme.

On the whole, the examiners were pleased with the depth of analysis for this challenging question.

## Assessment for learning



It is important for centres to make sure that candidates study the precise terms of the question before planning their responses. This question makes it explicit that candidates should assess the reasons for the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War in 431BC. Examiners commented that many candidates used examples of Athenian aggression from after the war began including even events from 20 years later. Similarly, extensive information from the Persian Wars was not always made relevant. Often the candidates who showed evidence of planning their responses scored the better marks, and so it is recommended that candidates should try to think about their arguments and plan their supporting evidence before they start writing.

## Exemplar 1

Before the war, Athens were gaining money from greek & non greek states, ~~we~~ we have <sup>ancient</sup> inscriptions that help support this, ~~idea~~, showing that Athens were becoming more and more richer by basically forcing smaller states to pay, with constant threat of invasion.

However, as mentioned before, although Athens had a booming income and constant expanding territory, their position inside became weakened after the outbreak of the plague. Their skilled commander pericles died leaving them at an even more vulnerable position.

This then set off a domino effect in Athens which basically triggered more and more failures on Athens part.

Exemplar 1 shows some idea of a key issue which is relevant to the question – the idea of Athens' increasingly aggressive and imperialistic attitude and behaviour towards allies. However, the claim is unsupported and significantly lacks detail. There is a reference to inscriptions (presumably tribute lists or decrees) but again this is not developed and so cannot be given any credit in AO3.

The next point about the plague and Pericles' death is not made relevant and is presented in an underdeveloped and unclear way. The lack of any supporting evidence and the impression of the chronology and detail means this paragraph would gain very little credit.



## Question 3

### 3 Read the interpretation below.

How convincing do you find the authors' interpretation of the reasons why Sparta won the Peloponnesian War?

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

The majority of responses received marks in the second highest level which shows a good understanding of the technique in how to deal with a modern interpretation question but perhaps responses did not go beyond simply looking at the extent to which the claims by the authors are supported by the ancient sources. Candidates are encouraged in these questions to engage with 'how convincing' using their own ideas and thoughts, which will be given full credit so long as they are coherent and credible.

'Inevitable' was not always dealt with and midrange responses focused instead on various theories as to why Athens had become so weak by 404BC. Sometimes these were too far-fetched with candidates citing the plague, Brasidas' campaigns and even the disaster in Sicily as the decisive factors for the eventual Athenian loss.

Candidates could have used Thucydides' comments in 2.65 to support the view from the interpretation but there appeared to be very little knowledge of this. There was some good detail of Xenophon as well as Plutarch *Lysander* in analysing the events at the end of the period.

More successful responses remained closely focused on the content of the interpretation and tackled a range of points raised by the historians.

The best responses tended to focus on three main arguments of the interpretation and used a wide range of specific detail from contextual knowledge and/or source material in support.

Less successful responses did not focus on the interpretation and instead wrote a response on why Athens lost the war. As a result, these responses could not achieve above Level 3 on the mark scheme.

The coverage of Persian intervention varied a great deal, with many responses either ignoring the issue (mentioned in the interpretation) or gave a very brief explanation of the role of Darius/Cyrus.

Better responses knew the main terms of the agreement with Sparta and were able to use specific battles to demonstrate the impact of Persian aid.

A number of responses gave views from other historians, which is not a requirement for the specification and often added very little value to their explanation. It would best for candidates to focus on the interpretation and how far contextual knowledge and/or ancient sources support this.

In discussing how convincing candidates found the authors' interpretation, several found themselves finding it very agreeable. To access the top level candidates really had to consider the question of inevitability mentioned in the opening words of the interpretation. There were also several points of confusion among the less successful responses, including: where Thucydides stops and Xenophon starts, some candidates stating that Thucydides never mentioned the Persians; Aegospotami and

Arginusae, and even Amphipolis. Candidates should also read the interpretation carefully, several finding it unconvincing because Persian funding had not stopped before the end of the war, thus essentially misunderstanding what the passage was saying. The gist of the argument was that if the Athenians had not lost at Aegospotami due to their own carelessness, the death of Darius might have meant the ending of Persian funding and thus the feasibility of a continued Spartan naval presence. Several candidates thought that Cyrus' friendship with Lysander would have been enough to ensure its continuity, ignoring the fact that Cyrus had already been recalled by Darius. It was not surprising that candidates were unaware of the succession issues within Persia, but knowledge of them was not necessary to gain high marks.

Many candidates did produce balanced arguments with evidence on the one hand of Thucydides' picking out Decelea as a decisive factor, the ongoing effects of the Sicilian disaster, the banishment of Alcibiades and then the generals after Arginusae, as opposed to the fact that Athens did hold on for eight years after Sicily and the occupation of Decelea and rebuilt her navy on several occasions and enjoyed considerable success, defeating the Spartan navy several times. Many also pointed out the importance of individuals - Lysander, Cyrus, Alcibiades in particular.

With most responses mid or upper-mid in terms of range, there is certainly scope next year for candidates to be braver and analyse the interpretation based on their own ideas and beliefs.

## Exemplar 2

Despite having this understanding, the Spartans did not man a navy of their own until after Athens' ~~defeat~~ Syracuse campaign where it was proven that Athens could be defeated at sea and that naval forces could be used successfully against them. But even with Siceliot and Italiot forces mentioned by Xenophon at the battle of Cyzicus, and at that point using Persian funding to ~~be~~ furnish its own navy rather than relying on Corinth's triremes, the ~~Spartans~~ Spartans were defeated again at Arginusai in 406, losing about 70 ships. In both cases, Athens rejected peace offers, but the Spartans were able to acquire more ships and gave the navy to Lysander. Having both suffered losses, it's questionable whether Sparta or Athens had more experienced sailors, or if it was a matter of Lysander's skill as an admiral. In the latter case, Athens had executed 6 strategoi and forced two others into exile, so the carelessness at Aegospotami is only ~~their~~ their fault. Had they not done so, they may have won against Lysander, but it is still doubtful as ~~the~~ Aristophanes wrote in the Knights: "The generals are <sup>numerous</sup> ~~many~~, but they're not ~~so~~ good for much!"

The extract in Exemplar 2 shows a good technique of tackling the modern interpretation question. The candidate is offering an assessment of the claims made in the extract about the inevitability of the Athenian defeat. The candidate is engaging well with 'how convincing', supporting their argument with their own knowledge, which is accurate and detailed, and making some references to Thucydides and Xenophon.

The style is analytical and the arguments are coherent. There is full engagement with the central issue and a good conclusion and sub-conclusions are reached.

## Section B overview

Examiners commented that the overall standard of the responses for Depth Study were impressive as candidates engaged well with the questions. Candidates in Question 5 and Question 6 showed good engagement with the essay questions supporting their analysis with detailed examples from the sources.

Evaluation of the sources was often good, although there is still a tendency from some candidates to copy out some standard phrases about each source at the end of each question, frequently exactly the same paragraph(s), rather than assessing the reliability of the actual passage they have used as evidence. However, there is the danger shown by some candidates who did try to do this merely to repeat the same sentence after every use of the same author. The aim should be to attempt some evaluation of the passage in context.

There seemed to be a good knowledge of the main events of Alexander's reign but these were narrated too often rather than analysed. The Depth Study necessitates engagement with issues and evaluation of evidence. Retelling stories is likely to only receive credit in AO1.

### 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 the Athenians' relationship with Philip in the years that followed the Peace of Philocrates? [12]

The responses to this question were overall the least successful across the paper. Background knowledge for many responses was either non-existent or limited to Demosthenes being a 'Philip-hater'. Many just said Demosthenes was 'biased' against Philip and provided no evidence.

Most repeated Demosthenes as if he were representative of the entire Athenian population, only a few gave a more nuanced approach and were aware of differing views within the Athenian citizenry.

Utility was often limited to a generic criticism of the motives of Demosthenes and responses focused on 'what can this passage tell us' rather than 'how useful is it'.

## Question 5\*

- 5\* 'Alexander did not respect the Persians or their customs; he simply exploited them for his own purposes.' How far do you agree with this view?

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

There was very good engagement with this question and candidates gave some good examples where sources were compared for similarities and differences (e.g. the burning of Persepolis). Many spoke in general terms of individual sources when evaluating, e.g. background of who Curtius Rufus was, the problems with Plutarch's dates, etc., where and when they were writing and mentioned that they used sources lost to us like Ptolemy, etc. More successful responses linked these to particular examples, although knowledge was good, analysis could have been improved. In many cases it was simple and brief (e.g. 'This showed that Alexander liked Persian customs'). Only a handful of candidates gave a nuanced approach with more than one interpretation of events. More successful responses actually analysed why he did these things looking at the political reasons (e.g. keeping Persian satraps like Ada because they had existing knowledge of the system, etc.).

Successful responses included both sides of the argument with examples to support them. Many candidates were not aware of the distinction between Persian and other cultures within the Persian empire and talked about Egyptian culture (e.g. Apis Bull, visit to Siwa) as if it were Persian. More successful responses (which were fewer) were aware of this.

## Question 6\*

- 6\*** How far do the sources enable us to understand the extent to which Alexander's aims changed over time?

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

Candidates were aware of the multiple aims of Alexander and how they changed over time. Many providing good examples. The more successful responses started before the conquest of Persia with the conquest of Greece and described him being influenced by his father Philip.

Again, like in Question 5, evaluation was problematic; candidates wrote in general terms without linking 'bias' or reliability to specific passages. Impressively, there were good examples of candidates using archaeological evidence (e.g. coins and inscriptions, 'Alexander sarcophagus') to support the literary texts.

### Misconception

Candidates should note that Question 6 specifically asks them to consider how far the evidence allows us to understand an idea. This is a different style of essay question to Question 5 which is a traditional 'essay-style' examination of an idea.

It is common in A Level Ancient History for essays to be asked in the manner of Question 6 and a different approach is needed to gain the marks in the highest levels.

It would be the wrong approach to read Question 6 as 'How far did Alexander's aims change over time?' and many candidates answered this question rather than the one being asked. The question specifically asks candidates to assess how far the sources aid or hinder our assessment of the central issue and so the right approach is to pick an aim of Alexander, outline what the sources say about this aim, then assess how far this aim changed or remained over time using support from the sources and then finally the candidate should critique the sources they have used in terms of their reliability or completeness concluding whether the evidence allows us to even make a judgement about change over time.

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