

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

ANCIENT HISTORY

H407

For first teaching in 2017

H407/13 Summer 2023 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.

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Paper 13 series overview

Candidates engaged very well with the exam paper. In this option, the Depth Study provided more successful answers than the Period Study, with candidates on the whole seemingly more familiar with the Macedon source material than the Persian or Peloponnesian Wars. Question 1 was attempted by only a minority of candidates and the modern interpretation was well discussed in places but too often was presented as a simple assessment of what Thucydides believed were the causes of the Peloponnesian War with little integration with the scholar's viewpoints expressed in the extract on the paper.

Of all the Question 4s across the Greek side of the qualification, the question on Alexander the Great's leadership provided the best responses in terms of assessing the source for utility.

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

Section A overview

Overall, candidates showed a good understanding of the main events in the two periods required by the essay questions. Successful responses to the essays 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 and the evaluation of the evidence used was often convincing and pertinent.

Question 1*

- 1* To what extent do the sources support the view that the Spartans always acted only in their own interests in the period 425–404 BC?

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

Not many candidates attempted this question. Those who did often chose to interpret the question as referring to the behaviour and interests of individual Spartans, e.g. Pausanias, Brasidas, Gylippus, Lysander and marks were given for these responses.

Most candidates mentioned Brasidas' Thracian campaign, but several used it as an example of Sparta not acting in their own interest as they were 'liberating' Athenian allies, but failing to mention that the purpose was to gain some negotiating points in order to recover the prisoners from Sphacteria – and the reaction of the Spartan authorities to Brasidas' success.

Most candidates were able to highlight the Peace of Nicias as an instance of Sparta acting in her own interests ignoring the wishes of her own allies.

Some of the most successful responses highlighted Sparta's reaction to Syracuse's request for assistance until persuaded by Alcibiades that it would be in their interests.

Less successful responses did not cover the whole period 425–404 BC in the question, omitting the Ionian War and the alliance(s) made with the Persians at the expense of the Ionian Greeks.

Exemplar 1

		The sources often lack detail through the period, and there is an unclear picture as to the
		extent to which the allies were consulted on various strategies. However, we are able to get a picture that I infer that they were not consulted from their reaction to the peace of Nicias in in 421 BC, as described by Thucydides who wrote "they would not sign the treaty unless fairer terms were produced." This refers to the reactions of Corinth and Thebes, who actual Thucydides tells us desert to Athens because of this. This suggests deep dissatisfaction with the peace, suggesting that the only Peloponnesian state it really benefited was Sparta. Thucydides suggests a reason that Sparta was so eager for peace, "Sparta most of all had reason for peace, since they were still anxious to get back the men from the island." This shows that Sparta's 120 men still dictated their policy on behalf of the allies 6 years later. In addition, Sparta's selfishness is shown by the clause reported by Thucydides within the peace, "The Athenians would come to the aid of Sparta with all their strength in the case of a slave war." This shows that Sparta's internal strife also affected their decision making on behalf of the allies - however it could also be argued that if Sparta suffered an extreme helot revolt they would be weaker which would disadvantage the allies. But

		either way, Sparta allows her own interest
		to influence her decision making - even against
		the wishes of her most important allies.

Exemplar 1 analyses very well the problems with the sources in assessing the question. It produces high-level evaluation worthy of the top level. The specific question about Spartan self-interest remains the focus of the response as the evaluation, analysis and evidence are all well integrated to reach convincing conclusions about the nature of the evidence in answering this specific question.

Question 2*

- 2* 'It was the unity which the Greeks showed against the Persians between 492 and 479 BC which was the key factor in their victory.'
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]**

Evaluation of the sources tended to centre on Herodotus. Some candidates fell into the trap of generic evaluation without reference to the specific passage referred to – which in fact was a common factor across all questions. Some of this for Herodotus was tautologous giving as a weakness that he did not necessarily believe what he was told, but as a strength that he checked his sources. There was also the usual common remark that he was an Athenian (which he wasn't) and so biased.

It was refreshing to see so many candidates using the Serpent Column, but some confusion over what it tells us with several candidates claiming it told us how many men and/or ships each state supplied and that it represented all who contributed throughout the wars rather than just at Plataea. There was also confusion over the exact number of states on the column (31).

As with Question 1, less successful responses did not answer with reference to the whole period mentioned in the question, concentrating only on 480–79. Even among those who did widen their discussion there was very little mention of 492.

There was good discussion of other factors which might have contributed to the victory of the Greeks, but very few came to a conclusion with reference to 'the key factor'. Less successful responses tended not to consider other factors, concentrating just on how united, or not, the Greeks were. In discussing the relatively small number of states on the Serpent Column in relation to the total number of Greek states, very few candidates considered whether some of them actually had a choice.

A common error was to say that Aegina medised; while it is true that they did agree to give Darius earth and water in 491, they are singled out by Herodotus for their contribution at Salamis and are in position 6 on the Serpent Column.

More successful responses acknowledged the contributions of individuals, including Miltiades at Marathon, and some came to the conclusion that it was the, admittedly limited, unity of the Greeks which gave them the numbers to be able to face the Persians. While there was good discussion of unity or otherwise in 480–79, very few mentioned 490. However, the most successful responses highlighted the lack of unity even among the Eretrians and Athenians in that campaign and the importance of Miltiades' persuasive powers at Marathon, along with some discussion of the famous flashing shield. Only one response made the point that one of the reasons that Xerxes may have fallen for Themistocles' trick was because he was aware that there was dissension within the Greek camp.

Question 3

3 Read the interpretation below.

In so far as anyone can be held *immediately* responsible for the outbreak of the war which did so much to eat away the great achievements of fifth-century Greece, I think it is the Spartans (and their allies, in particular the Corinthians) who must bear the blame. We know from Thucydides (7.18.2–3) that the Spartans themselves later realised they had been at fault in 432–1. It may well be that the Spartans and most of their allies conceived themselves as fighting to stop Athens from further increasing her power or wealth, which might take place at their expense; but this, of course, does not excuse them from breaking the Thirty Years Peace and resorting to war.

5

G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (adapted)

How convincing do you find G.E.M. de Ste. Croix's interpretation of who was responsible for the outbreak of war in 431 BC?

You must use your knowledge of the historical period and the ancient sources you have studied to analyse and evaluate G.E.M. de Ste. Croix's interpretation. **[20]**

There were many successful responses to this question with many attaining Levels 4 and 5. The phrase 'in so far as' at the start of the passage caused a few problems for some candidates who chose to ignore it and rather interpreted the passage as saying 'anyone' could be held responsible.

Some answers were very short, even from otherwise very successful scripts, with candidates apparently concentrating more on the essays, despite this question being worth over 20% of the total marks. Many of these responses only concentrated on the final sentence.

More successful responses discussed some other reasons for the outbreak of the war, including the role of Corinth over Epidamnus/Corcyra and Potidaea (and contrasting it with their intervention over the revolt of Samos), but only a few of the most successful commented on 'immediately', despite it being italicised and the crux of de Ste Croix's argument. Some of the most successful responses made the point that 'immediately' implies that there were other, less immediate causes. Many fell into the trap of simply giving a long narrative of the Pentacontaetia, often ignoring the more recent events after the Peace of 446, and 'immediately'.

Some responses sought to lay the blame on Thebes for attacking Plataea, ignoring the fact that Sparta had already given Athens its final ultimatum which Athens had refused to agree to. Many also brought in the Megarian Decree, but not many commented on why the Spartans chose to concentrate particularly on it in their second embassy.

Others sought to blame Athens for the war, citing Athens' aggressive imperialism, ignoring de Ste Croix's comment that it was Sparta who broke the treaty and his comment that they would be fighting 'to stop Athens from further increasing....'; this would have been a good opportunity to bring in Thucydides' immediate and underlying causes, but very few candidates did.

Among the less successful responses there was a fairly common idea that Sparta offered arbitration but Athens refused, or that the Spartans had even asked for peace among their embassies; what Athens did was to refuse to accede to the Spartans' increasingly provocative and aggressive demands, and indeed Pericles suggested that Athens should offer to go to arbitration. There were also several responses which gave the wrong year for the outbreak of the war, despite it being in the question, and some also included events from after the outbreak of the war.

Assessment for learning



There was a trend from many candidates in Question 3 that they apparently thought they should automatically disagree with the interpretation. The passages chosen for these questions normally come from well-respected authors, and candidates would be better advised to consider *why* the author might have come to the conclusion they did. They should also avoid being over-critical, especially about what they perceive as omissions. These are very short passages from often very long books. One such comment was that the writer 'struggles to convince me that he has understood the reasons for the war'. A better approach would be along the lines of 'other points not included in the interpretation are'.

Section B overview

Many more candidates than last year started Section B before Section A, reflected perhaps in the higher marks for Section B in that the source material seemed better known and better used. The passages by Arrian were well-known and used very convincingly to assess source utility. The essay question on Philip was much more popular than the essay on Alexander's victory at the River Issus but the majority of responses to the 36-mark questions made convincing use of the evidence and were supported by good depth and breadth of factual knowledge.

Question 4

Section B: The Rise of Macedon, c. 359–323 BC

4 Read the passages below.

How useful are these passages for our understanding of the nature of Alexander's leadership? [12]

The passages were utilised successfully for information related to the question. Many responses made some discussion of the value of Arrian as a source and considered the reliability and usefulness of the sources. Many responses also used their own knowledge to identify other events when Alexander's leadership could be explored, for example the Opis mutiny and the march through the Gedrosian desert.

Question 5*

5* 'Philip always sought conflict rather than peace.'

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]

This was the more popular of the two questions. There were some very good responses that demonstrated that the candidates had clearly explored the life and career of Philip in some detail. Events such as Crocus Fields, Chaeronea and sieges of Methone and Olynthus were used to consider the argument that Philip sought conflict. The use of marriage alliances, Peace of Philocrates and bribery also commonly explored. The reformation of the Macedonian army was also commonly explored successfully.

Sources were generally used and explored well. There was some good explorations of Demosthenes for instance and his value as a source.

Some responses explored how Philip transformed Macedon itself during his reign and used this as a springboard for further discussion into the motives of Philip for peace or war.

There were some candidates that misunderstood the relation of Amphipolis to Athens and Philip in the 350s.

Exemplar 2

5	3	<p>Philip according to Justin "intervened at the perfect time to attack the liberties of the Thessalians, "Philip as if from a watch tower waited for the correct moment to attack the liberties of the Greeks" therefore Justin demonstrates his belief that Philip waited for his chance to use conflict to insert himself into Thessalian elites. As we know Philip becomes Archon of Thessaly and unites the 3 factions in Thessaly into one. Although, as seen Justin doesn't support this view and believes Philip sought peace conflict to achieve this goal. Justin, may have been influenced by Trogus, because Justin writes an Epitome of Trogus which is an account made from the use of another. Thus, Justin's account may carry over dislike for Philip from Trogus' account. Therefore, it would be correct to argue using Justin's account that Philip did seek conflict to achieve his goals of becoming Archon of Thessaly.</p>
		<p>Although, in contrast Diodorus has a greatly different account of Philip's actions, Diodorus tells us "describes Philip as like he is doing the Thessalians a favour", "at the request of the Thessalians Philip entered Thessaly", therefore Diodorus' account demonstrates a different side of the story to Justin. Diodorus explains that Philip is asked to by the Thessalians to help resolve the conflict and create peace. Therefore,</p>

5	4	<p>using Diodorus' account one may argue that Philip didn't 'sought out conflict' but was merely in the right place at the correct time. and Furthermore, once the conflict was resolved he from then on promoted Peace. Diodorus as a source was legitimate and accurate to an extent; he was used contemporary accounts of Ephorus and Theopompus; and was selective in his source choices, although since he wrote a universal history that is meant he didn't use much detail. Furthermore, in relations to his actions in Thessily Diodorus tended to take Philip's actions at face value and therefore may have glossed over his true intentions, thus showing the why Justin's account may give us a better flavour of Philip's sought out conflict. But, using both accounts one would come to the conclusion that Philip, was ^{acting} in response in response to to Thessily but he may have had multiple motives when acting upon this claim. Thus, Philip didn't sought out conflict in this instance.</p>
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The response analyses well two different accounts of the same period in Philip's reign. The sources used are detailed and well explained, with convincing conclusions reached. The specific question is kept in focus. This extract is typical of performance in the highest band for all three Assessment Objectives as it successfully interwove analysis, interpretation and evaluation of the sources successfully.

Question 6*

- 6* How far do the sources support the view that the victory at the Issus was the most significant event of Alexander's campaigns?

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 less popular than Question 5. Most candidates used the battle of Issus as a springboard for further discussion. Some responses confined their scope to the military aspects of Alexander's career, a catalogue of the battles and this often had the consequence of limiting their answers. Other responses focused on other factors such as Alexander's attempts to fuse the Persian and Macedonian-Greeks with varying degrees of success. There was some good discussion of Alexander's more controversial actions, for example, at Persepolis, the Gedrosian desert and the marriages at Susa. Or the more personal factors, such as the murder of Cleitus.

Sources were often handled well in this question, especially Arrian and Plutarch. Other responses included the Porus medallion and the sarcophagus and explored their usefulness.

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