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Examiners' report

ANCIENT HISTORY

H007
For first teaching in 2017

H007/02 Summer 2023 series

Contents

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.

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Paper 2 series overview

Examiners commented on the high number of scripts which engaged very well with the questions. Question 1 answers showed good understanding of the Roman invasion of Britain in terms of the historical narrative but benefits to Claudius were often not discussed, despite the clear prompt in the question.

Actium seems to be a well-known part of the specification with many answers to Question 2 drawing in other information from sources outside the exam paper with far more success than in 2022. Of the two essay questions, Question 3 was more popular. Essay answers focused on narrative history rather than source-based evidence in too many places.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
- had a secure knowledge of the period studied - had 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 - made evaluations focused on the reliability of the specific point being made.	- 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

Question 1 requires no extra support from sources; a simple factual response to the issue which then goes on to make convincing judgements is all that is required. The central issues are wide enough for all candidates to score highly even by approaching the question in different ways. Question 2 asks the candidates to extract relevant support from the passage on the question paper and to use supporting evidence from other relevant sources to address the question posed.

Question 1

1   How beneficial to Claudius was the Roman invasion of Britain?   **[10]**

The more successful responses to this question focused on the tangible benefits that the invasion of Britain brought to Claudius as an emperor. Many of the more successful responses focused on glory, economic benefits and building relationships with the aristocracy, the plebs and the military. The most successful showed a good understanding of the context in which Claudius became emperor and the need for a quick and decisive military victory. There was awareness of the victory arches and the name of Britannicus given to both Claudius and his son.

Less successful responses missed out the idea of benefits and gave a purely narrative account of the events of the early conquest, including the battles of Medway and Thames which is not strictly asked for by the question.

Question 2

2   Read the following passage.

> On one side was Augustus Caesar, leading the Italians
> To battle together with Senate and People, the Penates
> And the great gods, standing on the high poop, while from his brow
> Twin flames shot joyfully upward, and on his helmet his father's star appeared.
> On the other wing, Agrippa, with the winds and the gods on his side,   5
> Stood aloft, leading his line, and -that proud badge of war-
> His temples adorned with the ships' beaks of the naval crown.
> On the other side, with barbarous arms and a motley array,
> Antony, returned in conquest from the eastern peoples and the Red Sea,
> Brought Egypt into the battle, the might of the Orient, far-away Bactria,   10
> While (for shame!) an Egyptian wife followed behind.
>
> The queen herself could be seen, having summoned the winds,
> To be opening her sails and now, even now, to have loosened the ropes.
> Amid carnage, and pale at the prospect of death, the fire-god
> Had portrayed her carried along by the waves and the north-west wind.   15
>
> Virgil, *Aeneid* 8. 678-688, 707–710
> [LACTOR 17]

On the basis of this passage, and other sources you have studied, how consistent is the portrayal of the victory over Antony and Cleopatra at Actium?   **[20]**

This question seemed well known to candidates as the passage was used with much more success than last year. Candidates recognised the pro-Augustan account and suggested influences on Virgil in promoting the imperial image in this way.

There were many responses which only dealt with the passage, despite the clear prompt in the question. But those responses that did go beyond the passage made use of Dio, Suetonius and Horace well. There was good understanding about the importance of the battle of Actium in history as well as the benefits of Actium to Augustus in securing the title of and power as Rome's first *Princeps*.

Some of the responses dealt with the idea of consistency and inevitably these achieved marks in the highest band.

Section B overview

Most responses to the essay questions reached sensible conclusions derived from the ancient evidence. Evaluation of the sources must be specific to the point being made. There was still generic evaluation bolted on at the end of an essay.

Question 3 was significantly more popular than Question 4.

Question 3*

3*   How far does the evidence help us to understand the attitudes of the emperors towards religion?

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

There were many successful responses to this question as there is a wide range of evidence to draw on. The imperial cult was used either exclusively or as part of the answer. Responses gave excellent factual understanding of why the imperial cult was unpalatable within the city of Rome and the difference in attitude towards worshipping deified emperors or living ones. There were numerous examples of candidates applying detailed evidence about Augustus' restoration of religion, Tiberius' reluctance to be worshipped in Rome and the empire, Caligula's approach to his own godhead, Claudius deification and Nero's panhellenism.

More successful responses connected the evidence to attitudes of emperors but limited themselves to three emperors in detail (often one of whom was Augustus) rather than trying to cover all five.

The less successful responses offered unsubstantiated judgements and focused only on the imperial cult. There was, when used, a good understanding of what the sources tell us about the persecution of the Christians in the reign of Nero.

Misconception
?   Many candidates saw the prompt to talk about Roman religion as being exclusively limited to the imperial cult. The question above mentions the attitude of emperors towards religion and that includes the imperial cult but also to traditional Roman state religion, foreign cults including Christianity and Isis.

Exemplar 1

Gaius also disrespectful other religions. Josephus, a Jewish historian writing for the Flavians, [as] states that Gaius attempted to place a statue of himself in the Temple of Jerusalem. Josephus portrays this action as being sacrilegious and a great offence. This is because Josephus was himself Jewish, and Gaius' action could have been a [great] personal offence. ~~There is a slight possibility that Jose~~ Josephus could [further] biased against Gaius because of his ~~duty to the Flavians to~~ loyalty to the Flavians. Josephus was Vespasian's, the first Flavian emperor's freedman, and a friend of Titus', the second. He could therefore wish to help the Flavians look good by disparaging the Julio-Claudians.

> Here is a well written paragraph which scored highly in all three assessment objectives. The candidate goes beyond the imperial cult to discuss Gaius' relationship with the Jewish religion using detailed source material which is well evaluated and made relevant to the specific terms of the question.

Question 4*

4* 'While his mother was alive Nero ruled well. After her death, he failed to meet all the challenges of his reign.'

To what extent do you agree with this view?

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

This question had fewer responses in the highest band compared to Question 3. Most candidates had a good grasp of the influence of Agrippina and how Nero's reign turned disastrous after her death in 59. There were hardly any examples of candidates offering an assessment of Nero's reign from 54 to 59 but there was good coverage of the events in the 60s such as the Piso plot, the great fire of Rome and the catastrophes in 68 in the provinces.

Source material supported analysis with varying degrees of success. Suetonius was used more than any other source but not in a way to show that Nero's reign had challenges nor indeed how he failed to meet these.

Evaluation was generic in places and they did not seem to be a good enough understanding of the politics of the 60s or indeed the importance of the military and the provincial governors. Most responses were aware of the murder of Britannicus and the influence of his mother, Seneca and Burrus on the younger Nero. Often, responses to this question were based on the narrative history rather than a clear engagement with the specific question.

Exemplar 2

Nero's "mother was very significant during his reign as he would often have her and 2 others (including bruses) for guidance and support. Although, Agrippina was said by Seretonius to (sexually control) Nero as an advisor. This would disagree with the view that Nero ruled well while his mother was alive. This was also said to be a reason as to why Nero murdered... his mother through poisonous mushrooms.

Even when Agrippina was alive Nero was still seen by the Senate and Public as a traitor. Nero loved the theater and arts, he also loved Greek ~~or~~ Culture. This gave him the title of a traitor and he was seen as philhellenic (Greek + Loving). He was even said to have taken part in the greek Olympic games and (win every event). This also would disagree with the view that Nero ruled effectively while Agrippina was alive.

Here is a clear attempt to engage with the question by examining Nero's relationship with his mother. There is one reference to Tacitus but overall the evidence is not detailed enough to reach judgements. There is partial engagement with the question but the response relies on unsubstantiated assertion.

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