



General Certificate of Education

Archaeology 2011
Specification

Unit ARCH3

Report on the Examination
2010 examination – June series

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Unit ARCH3

World Archaeology

General Comments

This first paper went very well. With very few exceptions, candidates produced responses to three essays chosen from the appropriate sections and there was far less evidence than in the legacy papers of student running seriously short of time. Only a few candidates ignored the rubric about choosing only two questions (and from different themes) from Section A. Section B had been more of a concern to centres before the exam as it was a new element (although there had been an 'archaeology and the community' section in the pre-2000 A Level). It is good to report that candidates (and their tutors) clearly rose to the challenge and many wrote interesting and thought-provoking responses. There was genuine engagement with current issues in archaeology and it is clear that most candidates had been well-prepared for the examination. Overall, there were fewer really poor performances than for several years.

Section A

Theme 1: People and Society in the Past

Question 1

Was relatively popular, but was probably the question where more candidates missed the point than any other. This question was on social or political change and situated in the People and Society theme, but many candidates produced essays on the start of agriculture in the Near East or occasionally Japan (Nittano). Whether these were prepared responses triggered by the word 'change' was not clear but it did result in many candidates scoring poorly. There were opportunities, even with an agriculture focus, to address social issues such as gender roles, family units, population etc but these were not usually explored. Many responses looked at competing economic theories of causation. While these had some generic relevance since they were linked to social changes, without exploration of the latter students were often restricted to the lower half of Level 3. Amongst the better essays were some on the collapse of the Maya civilisation or the Anasazi which explored a range of competing ideas.

Question 2

Was not attempted by many candidates, although there were some good responses based on the 'blood of the Vikings series' and on recent analysis of DNA from LBK burials. Some scripts focussed on 'out of Africa' although most struggled to link genetics research to human expansion. A number of weaker responses wrote about stable isotope analysis.

Question 3

Was popular. Weaker responses ignored the 'nature of' element in the question and answered the question they had prepared about whether archaeology can detect signs of conflict in the past. While these were sometimes relevant they struggled to get beyond Level 3. By 'nature' the question is asking for discussion of elements such as scale, reasons, strategy and tactics,

weapons and warriors. There were some very detailed and well focussed essays drawing on Trajan's Column for evidence of Roman tactics and Towton to discuss the nature of medieval warfare. Oetzi the Iceman frequently cropped up although candidates struggled to make much use of their knowledge, and less relevantly, Tollund Man. Whilst there were rarely the kind of essays based on warfare in classical texts that we have seen in the past, it may be worth reminding candidates who also do Classical Civilisation or Ancient History that we do expect the evidence base in archaeology essays to be physical evidence.

Theme 2: Sites and People in the Landscape

Question 4

Was very popular. Many candidates were able to identify a range of reasons and provide both case studies and ethnographic analogies as part of their discussions.

Question 5

Drew responses on both options. The most common approaches were to look at early agricultural settlements.

Question 6

Relatively few candidates attempted this question which was perhaps surprising since it was the most synoptic and also the one where candidates had most opportunity to refer to work undertaken on personal studies. Better candidates focussed on a period whether it was 'the Ice Age' or Medieval England and selected appropriate sources and techniques to discuss. Candidates who wrote about how humans used the landscape were rarely relevant.

Theme 3: Economics and Material Culture

Question 7

Was not frequently attempted, but when it was, it was often done well. Hunter-gatherer societies were the most frequently discussed, with candidates often making connections between Star Carr or Dolni Vestonici and studies of modern foragers and/or survivalist programmes - all of which could be relevant. The scope of some candidates was very impressive including boats, fabric, baskets, tools and structures.

Question 8

Was popular with a clear distinction between candidates who picked up on 'large scale' and those who chose to ignore it. The latter got credit for generic material on process, but could not access the full mark range. Examiners adopted an open view on what constituted production and accepted evidence on large scale agricultural production and extraction as well as the making of artefacts. In the case of the latter, production for market or at least long distance exchange was accepted as different in scale from household production or individual commissions. There were some particularly good essays dealing with copper (Great Orme) and flint (Grimes Graves) alongside those on the manufacture of pottery and metal artefacts. It was good to see some local studies included as well as the better known sites. This question is another good example where candidates could draw on their learning and examples from ARCH2.

Question 9

Was also popular. The most frequent approach was to look at what could be inferred from the Ulu Burun and other Eastern Mediterranean wrecks, although recent discoveries in the English Channel were also mentioned. Weaker response simply described the cargo or chose to write about exchange generally. This last point illustrates a general issue where candidates have a preferred (perhaps prepared) response in mind and write it regardless. It is generally better to attempt to answer the question set. Sutton Hoo is not an example of a shipwreck.

Section B

All four questions were attempted by large numbers of candidates. Questions 10 and 13 were the more popular and there were clear variations by centre, but all questions proved accessible. Candidates seemed comfortable with the discursive format of these questions.

Question 10

There were many sound responses to this question. Unsurprisingly, the Staffordshire Hoard appeared frequently but what was good was the way candidates teased several issues out of it. This suggested that many centres are using news items for discussion on a regular basis. One curious thing was the number of candidates from different centres who thought that the Sutton Hoo burial had been discovered by detectorists.

Question 11

Responses were stronger on argument than on case study. A range of points were often made, but many case studies, such as the Elgin Marbles, would have been better used in other questions. Few candidates seemed to have actually looked at auction house sites on the web. However, there were some well prepared candidates including several who drew on James Cuno's work 'Who Owns Antiquity? Museums and the Battle over our Ancient Heritage', (Princeton UP, 2008). There are numerous good websites which deal with this issue. The SAFE (saving antiquities for people) site is particularly useful and includes the recent looting of Mashkan Shapir in Iraq. One centre looked at this issue while looking at the site as a case study of abandonment and environmental degradation (see link):

http://www.savingantiquities.org/feature_page.php?featureID=7

The site of the Illicit Antiquities Research Centre is also valuable and includes further articles on the fate of Iraqi antiquities:

<http://www.mcdonald.cam.ac.uk/projects/iarc/culturewithoutcontext/issue11/blum.htm>

A useful blog, with good links to current issues can be found at:

<http://culturalpropertylaw.wordpress.com/>

Question 12

Saw a number of responses on repatriation (as did question 13), again suggesting that some candidates were hoping to use prepared material. There is an overlap, but repatriation alone did not get candidates far. However, there were also some excellent responses ranging from Mussolini to Aborigine groups. There are opportunities to look at the way new states carve out identities separate from older states by seeking to use archaeology to show that they have been a distinct entity in the past e.g. Eritrea wishing to be distinct from Ethiopian history; and by post-colonial states using archaeology to show that they had a substantial pre-colonial past e.g. Zimbabwe and Gt Zimbabwe; Nigeria and Ife/Benin. One centre recommends using 'You Tube' clips of the destruction of the Mostar Bridge or the Bamiyan Buddhas as stimulus for class discussion

Question 13

Proved very accessible and again appeared to be a question that benefited from class discussion of news items. 'Charlie' from Avebury was frequently cited with candidates often displaying a detailed understanding of the case. Oetzi, Lindow Man and the Manchester Museum mummies were also popular. Another example, which might be of use for Question 12 too, would be that of the Greenland Mummies – see Hansen, Meldegard and Nordquist (British Museum Press, 1991). These mummies were conserved in Denmark and are now on display in Greenland - i.e. in the country to which they belong, but had they been found a generation earlier, while Greenland was more under Denmark's control, they may well have been taken to Copenhagen and kept there for display - an issue that could relate to the subject matter of Question 12.

Although not covered in this year's exam, those centres teaching cultural resource management may want to look at the PPS15 website from where the document can be downloaded:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps5>

In marking Section B essays we placed more of a premium on range of issues raised, engagement with the debate and understanding and argument and did not expect quite the depth of knowledge of detailed case studies as we see in Section A, although some candidates did surprise us in this respect. The generic essay mark scheme was used for assessing Section B essays, but the following outline, indicative characteristics of key levels, may be useful for centres in calibrating their own assessments:

Level 2

- Either a basic grasp of the debate or selects relevant examples but lacks development
- very limited range of points
- coherence, explanation and argument are not sustained
- examples are superficial.

Level 3

- Relevant and largely accurate selection
- understanding of the issue for archaeology
- a range of points but likely to be unbalanced
- examples may be detailed but not really exploited
- appraisal will be simple or limited.

Level 4

- Well focussed
- details, accurate examples
- logical, purposeful and balanced arguments
- most examples exploited
- range of evidence and issues
- a conclusion is reached.

Level 5

- Discursive approach
- wide range of issues and / or evidence considered
- critical understanding of issues
- evaluation clear and well reasoned
- clear argument: balanced with flair
- a clear, logical conclusion is reached.

A further point, relevant to both sections A and B, that centres should consider. One of the objectives of the A2 examination is that candidates demonstrate that they can make use of all their studies in Archaeology (synopticity). Although there may be opportunities for candidates to draw upon their studies in ARCH1 and ARCH2, it will be ARCH4 that could provide some really exciting possibilities. Many ARCH4 studies relate to sites, landscapes or artefacts that illustrate themes in both sections of ARCH3. We looked, largely in vain, for candidates making connections this year, but we felt that answers to questions 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 13 could have made use of ARCH4 projects, depending on what had been chosen. Perhaps tutors should spend some time encouraging candidates to think how their ARCH4 project could be used to support answers to at least some questions in ARCH3. Finally, it is worth stressing the benefit for Section B of taking a two year approach to the preparation of candidates for this unit, using ARCH 1 and 2 as opportunities to raise contemporary issues with regard to topics such as excavation (rescue vs research etc), burials (ethical treatment of human remains) and remote sensing (metal detecting). Raising these topics in context will make them easier to teach and also enable students to link them to case studies.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the **Results statistics** page of the AQA Website.