



**General Certificate of Education
June 2011**

Archaeology 1011

**ARCH 1 The Archaeology of Religion and
Ritual**

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

Most centres seem to have settled well into the new Specification and its different demands, but some familiar problems have still been apparent especially when it comes to the definitions in Section A.

Section A

These questions are often answered very well. A significant minority of students are, however, writing far more than necessary for each 5 mark definition - this then has a detrimental impact on their ability to devote sufficient time to sections B & C.

Definitions should comprise of **three** elements: definition / context / named example – see the published mark scheme – which must be present to score full marks. Some centres are still not teaching candidates how to approach definition questions effectively. The example below illustrates good practice:

A pilgrim is a person who travels on a journey to a holy place often in a quest for spiritual enlightenment or to fulfill a vow or duty.
Pilgrims often make offerings and carry out rituals in the holy place and may stay here for several days while this is accomplished.
A place where this occurred is Abydos where the mound of pots known as 'Umm el Qaab' attests to votive practices and sculpture from the Tomb of Nespaquashuty explains that he and his wife undertook a pilgrimage to the Festival of Osiris.

It would be very difficult if not impossible to cover all of the definitions with examples drawn from only one period so the Specification allows candidates to use examples from other periods where there is a gap in the period they have chosen. Thus 'animism' would not be possible in Ancient Egypt so candidates might use contexts in Roman Britain instead.

Relying on broad generalisations such as 'in Christianity' for context is poor technique. Similarly referring to modern Islamic practices and holy sites will not do as a named example. Modern examples never work well – take care with throw-away parallels in class which may become incorporated into candidates' memory as 'correct responses'.

Teachers should not rely entirely on the five specified sites in Section B to illustrate these terms, but supplement them with a selection of others.

- 01** Significant numbers were unable to define pilgrim or wrote about pilgrimage. Mecca often featured at the expense of many perfectly acceptable archaeological examples such as Uley or Abydos.
- 02** Lots of answers to animism used modern or ethnographic parallels as examples and therefore lacked archaeology – some centres seem to be teaching this as a way of getting 5 marks, despite what the questions and rubric clearly state. Some confused animism with shamanism.
- 03** Few candidates accessed the idea of the study of the meanings behind art but there were many good accounts of particular artistic contexts.

Section B

There were some excellent and detailed answers – closely related to physical elements of the site & their ritual explanation. The more confident answers explained the ritual significance as they progressed rather than just allowing the sites to ‘speak for themselves’ or simply making a passing response to significance almost as an afterthought. A minority of candidates appeared not to be familiar with the sites and gave generic answers about the broad type of site or confused sites entirely – Flag Fen seemed problematic here, though there were also many detailed and well-written answers. The Egyptian context produced some polarization of responses: at the top end the features of Karnak were specifically explained and linked to their symbolic function and meaning, while at the bottom some candidates contented themselves with a generic ‘temple’ answer. In the Roman section, a significant minority chose to write generically with little or no reference to the physical evidence from Water Newton – overview rather than direct archaeological evidence used.

A small minority of candidates seemed to answer on prescribed sites outside of the period / context they had been taught – perhaps centres need to be clearer about the relevance and advisability of teaching more than one period/context as this (without exception) resulted in very thin / generalised answers.

Centres are once again reminded that a new set of sites will be examined for the first time in January 2012 (although the current sites will also be available until June 2012). There is guidance material available via the AQA website in the Archaeology Teacher Resource Bank.

Section C

- 07** Lots of good definitions but supporting evidence was variable in content and quality. Obvious exemplars like Windmill Hill and West Kennet were used. Hambledon would have worked well here or the evidence from Isbister.
- 08** This was often misinterpreted to mean any landscape with monuments in it with correspondingly poor responses which sometimes veered off to discuss environmental archaeology.
- 09** Candidates seemed fairly well versed in the generality of Venus figurines and the range of possible interpretations, but usually their knowledge of actual named examples was poor to non-existent.
- 10** Generally well answered on the basis of recent research and television coverage.
- 11** Too many candidates picked up on ‘temple’ at the expense of the ‘mortuary’ aspect and produced generalised accounts, many about cult temples. Few examples other than Medinet Habu. Inclusion of other examples such as the Ramesseum, Abu Simbel or Deir el Bahri might have helped.
- 12** Candidates choosing this question seemed to have good knowledge of the general context, but their grasp of supporting detail (e.g. from the Tell el Amarna site itself or from exhibits in the Cairo Museum) was less secure.
- 13** As might be expected, this question produced lots of good responses which were able to outline the process well enough; comparatively few candidates succeeded in using

correct terminology throughout or in linking their points either to specific pieces of evidence or the precise religious significance of each stage and item.

- 14** Again this practice seemed to be well understood, but detail from relevant sites was much thinner on the ground – absence of references to Sakkara and its proliferation of animal cemeteries was rather surprising.
- 15** Often well answered, but few candidates broke through to the top level, relying rather on broad brush accounts which in turn depended mostly on sites from Section B. The best responses included a wider range of evidence from around the country such as Manchester and Hinton St. Mary in addition to the obvious examples.
- 16** Bath figured largely here, but again there were few instances of other significant sites like Coventina's Well and many attempts to shoehorn sites into this category that did not really belong here such as the Mithraeum at Carrawburgh.
- 17** This proved attractive to many candidates. It is hard to describe all of the appropriate features if you choose a one-off oddity such as the Temple of Vesta in Rome. A much better choice would have been Bath or Apollo at Pompeii.
- 18** Attempts at this question were very variable with much misunderstanding of what was meant by 'household gods' such that major deities were often adduced erroneously in evidence and few candidates were able to access actual examples even though there are many in Pompeii alone. This serves as a reminder that this section is not meant to cover only Roman Britain and centres that curtail their coverage in this way are at risk of falling short on questions like this.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.