



**General Certificate of Education
June 2011**

Archaeology 1011

ARCH 3 World Archaeology

Report on the Examination

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ARCH3

Section A

General Comments

As with the 2010 paper, all questions were attempted (candidates within larger centres typically selected from around 6 of the 9 Section A questions and 3-4 of those in Section B). Questions 1, 2, 5, 7 and 8 were the most popular in Section A, but good numbers attempted all except Question 9. This was a little disappointing since the topics covered by this question had been discussed at teacher support meetings. Questions on aspects of production and consumption, or particular broad classes of artefacts are a valid focus for Theme 3 and could also draw on Theme 1. We will continue to explore these kinds of topic. There were large numbers of good answers for all of the Section B questions providing welcome evidence that centres are devoting sufficient attention to this aspect of the unit and preparing candidates well for it. The increase of choice has meant that there were no centres where there was evidence of candidates being stuck without questions they could answer.

A small number of candidates ignored the rubric, choosing 3 questions from Section A. In these instances all 3 were marked and credit given for the 2 strongest. However, clearly such candidates disadvantaged themselves - this may be a point centres might wish to reinforce to candidates just before they sit the exam.

A worrying trend, observed at a few centres, is over-reliance on prepared answers. This was clearly the case in some responses to Question 1 where near-identical responses on gender were produced. While attractive to weaker candidates, this approach can severely limit most. Candidates generally do best where they engage with the question and select from their material what is the most appropriate – after all, these are skills the exam is designed to test. In this instance some material that was used was more appropriate to a question on divisions in society than the one set. Some of the responses would have possibly scored better in response to Question 5. It may be that candidates should be given more practice in selecting from and responding to a range of questions.

As reported last year, more and more candidates are able to refer to case study material, frequently in some detail, in response to questions. However, there is also a slight tendency towards inaccuracy and, at worst, made-up sites. In the former case some candidates took a site (e.g. Star Carr or Tybrind Vig) and added any other material they knew from the period to it – essentially they were providing generic rather than specific detail as a result. Prepared paragraphs restating Hawkes's ladder of inference (often for each essay) or variations on 'evidence of absence' rarely added to essays and could usefully be discouraged.

Centres continue to cover an impressive range of cultures. More European and Meso-American sites featured than in previous years and the inclusion of Evolution in Section B is encouraging more exploration of Early Palaeolithic sites. Curiously, Mediaeval (beyond the 9th century) or later sites rarely feature unless students draw on personal studies.

Finally, centres should be aware that while there are no plans to significantly amend ARCH3 unit content, reorganisation of the Section B into four sections, to mirror the number of questions, is being considered. The proposed reorganisation, with rationale, will be published in the Archaeology Teachers' Resource Bank on the AQA website in September.

Section A

Theme 1: People and Society in the Past

Question 1

This was a very popular question, but also one where many candidates answered on what they wanted to write about rather than what they were asked. There was greater focus on structure (usually gender) than size although where candidates did explore the latter they generally did well. A number of candidates read this as a question about structures (buildings) even though it is in the social section, while others really wanted to write about social structure in general. There were some good responses drawing on sites as diverse as Pompeii, Ceren and Cladh Hallan. A few focussed on methodology but this was frequently vague, e.g. mention of carrying capacity. The recent interpretation of the 'locked' hut at Skara Brae as reflecting menstruation confinement and the earlier patriarchal model in each house of big bed male: small bed female and children are clearly valid examples to discuss. However, more so than on other questions, many candidates treated these interpretations as factual without understanding how they were arrived at or whether other interpretations were equally possible. This may reflect the presentation on the BBC webpage.

Question 2

Responses here were often much stronger on 'identification' than 'emergence'. Some candidates overlooked emergence entirely while a few ignored the 'either' in the question and just provided examples of status or complexity randomly taken from examples of chiefdoms and states. There were some excellent responses drawing on evidence from the Oaxaca Valley, Iron Age Europe and Anglo Saxon England. Hochdorf - one of the new paper 1 sites (see <http://www.keltenmuseum.de/english/index.html>), along with Sutton Hoo, featured prominently.

Question 3

The Roman Army was the most popular topic and a full range of responses resulted. Weaker answers told the story of the Roman Conquest while more focussed examples drew on artistic evidence such as Trajan's Column alongside excavations of fortifications such as Caerleon (<http://www.caerleon.net>).

There were a couple of responses based on monasteries and some interesting essays looking at sacred Maya Lords, but most answers focussing on religion were disappointing. While a synoptic approach is welcomed, we are expecting more than a description comprising of all the candidate can remember about Roman or Egyptian religion.

Theme 2: Sites and People in the Landscape

Question 4

This question reflected the move of some scientific topics to A2 and also was intended as an opportunity for candidates who had gone beyond the defined topics for ARCH2 or had considered methodology when looking at landscape. Given that there was a TV programme a few days before the exam on the use of satellites to discover buried sites in Egypt it was unsurprising that many responses majored on that topic. The best ones were detailed and understood how the technologies worked, weaker ones did not. Elsewhere many responses were relatively low level lists of methods from ARCH2 without consideration of either particular, named contexts or any attempt to prioritise as required by the question.

Question 5

A familiar type of question, so it was surprising that it was not more popular. Interestingly, some of the descriptions of finds at Vindolanda or Skara Brae would have probably scored better on this question than they did on Question 1 or Question 3. Amongst the more interesting accounts were from candidates who drew on Shaugh Moor, Pompeii, Ceren and the Viking era chieftains' farm at Borg-in-Lofoten (http://www.lofotr.no/Engelsk/en_index.html). A few candidates productively discussed 'fieldscapes' and 'off-site areas'. Binford's studies in Alaska were frequently mentioned, although not always applied to archaeological examples. Candidates may need reminding that Butser is not actually an archaeological site although it clearly has relevance. The hearths from Combe Grenal featured in this question as well as Question 1. As with Skara Brae, only one interpretation was considered. Others can be accessed via <http://www.intechinc.com/neanderthal-society/combe-grenal-rgz.html> or http://www.lofotr.no/Engelsk/en_index.html.

Question 6

Where candidates answered the question, rather than described settlements, this was often well done. There were some very good responses on late Mesolithic and early farming sites. The Oaxaca Valley studies were particularly well-used here as was the early LBK site of Vaihingen in Germany. This site appears to be a fruitful one for a whole range of topics crossing all three themes and one where a battery of laboratory techniques are being employed in post-excavation to address key questions. (http://home.bawue.de/~wmwerner/grabung/vaih99_e.html).

Theme 3: Economics and Material Culture

Question 7

This was popular and often done well, with candidates considering a range of evidence. As with last year's exam there was an attempt to balance Question 8 with a topic more accessible to candidates who had studied early periods and this approach seems to generally work well. There were however, a lot of candidates who thought or assumed that Oetzi or various bog bodies were hunter gatherers so perhaps these case studies need setting in a bit more context. In approaching this question some candidates overlooked the more obvious sources of evidence (e.g. faunal remains) to just concentrate on techniques such as isotope analysis. Candidates were often better on diets which were the product of hunting rather than gathering. In part this reflects survival issues but also the sites selected. Amongst the better responses were some making use of organic finds from the Mexican sites of Guila Naquitz Cave and Gheo Shih in the Oaxaca Valley.

Question 8

This was generally done well. The best responses married theories to real examples. There were candidates who just knew one or the other. A limiting factor was where candidates discussed more advanced agricultural systems rather than its introduction. Responses on Neolithic Britain were as valid as those on the Near East or Mexico. Guila Naquitz Cave also featured in this question (<http://www.pnas.org/content/98/4/2104.full>) illustrating the way candidates can select different aspects of a case study to answer different questions.

Question 9

This produced relatively few, but some interesting, responses. These included evidence from Oakbank Crannog regarding milk curd and butter and textiles buried with the Pazyryk 'Ice Maiden'.

Section B

Question 10

While some candidates simply discussed excavation, most did address the question. At times this involved presentation of kinds of pure research versus pure rescue which could be extremely stereotypical particularly with regard to how well units or research groups carry out their work. It was sometimes described as a competition. The best responses were able to see that rescue can also be research and to focus in on particular areas or groups of sites to make their points. There was some impressive knowledge of local excavations from some candidates and almost all were able to provide examples even if they were Inchtuthil. The Stonehenge riverside project at Durrington Walls was particularly well used in discussion although few candidates seemed aware of the 1966-68 rescue dig there which would provide an excellent contrast (with superb pictures) for a whole range of topics: Wainwright, G J, and Longworth, I H, Durrington Walls Excavations, 1966-1968 (Reports of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London 29). London: Society of Antiquaries, 1971.

Question 11

Candidates tended to major on either World Heritage Sites or the concept of world heritage. While the latter was the intention behind the question, both were accepted. The former approach was dominated by discussion of protection versus the pitfalls of being tourist (or robber) attractions. Stonehenge, Lascaux and Aswan and the Bamiyan Buddhas featured heavily. The latter approach tended to focus on the British Museum and the way it is seeking to represent itself. There were some good responses looking at the validity of, and tension between, national and world archaeology. The Elgin Marbles and the Cyrus cylinder clearly were relevant here although candidates who simply wrote prepared responses on repatriation were not always relevant. NAGPRO was also rarely used in a relevant way.

Question 12

This produced a range of interesting responses. Centres are clearly getting students to reflect on museum visits and a wide range of regional as well as national museums featured. These included Ipswich, Luton, Caerleon, Manchester, Cheddar, Cirencester, West Stow, Pitt Rivers, Vindolanda and Hull. Sometimes this involved local national contrasts, others between different approaches to display or general versus themed. Descriptions of what museums do tended to fall into Level 2 or low Level 3, but there were many who engaged with the question and reached Level 4 or above. The most common failure was not distinguishing communication from education. Most focused on methods not messages or audiences.

Question 13

This question showed how many centres are looking at early prehistory in some depth now. Many students had a good understanding of the uses and limitations of current DNA research and could link it to examples and debates. The fate of the Neanderthals and Out of Africa 2 were the most commonly addressed. The best were able to set DNA evidence against other discoveries in order to evaluate impact.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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