

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

H408

For first teaching in 2017

H408/23 Summer 2022 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.

Advance Information for Summer 2022 assessments

To support student revision, advance information was published about the focus of exams for Summer 2022 assessments. Advance information was available for most GCSE, AS and A Level subjects, Core Maths, FSMQ, and Cambridge Nationals Information Technologies. You can find more information on our [website](#).

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Paper 23 series overview

The paper is one of the four options for 'Culture and the Arts' and covers the issues surrounding the Persian Wars which gave rise to the concept of the 'barbarian' in the Greek mind. It offers a mixture of low tariff AO1 questions, alongside longer responses which require skills to be demonstrated in both AO1 and AO2.

Candidates dealt with the lower tariff questions effectively. For the longer questions they had clearly grasped the sense that they were studying a topic which involved comparing and contrasting the nature of Greeks and barbarians (in this paper's case, Persians). To do well on the paper, candidates needed to combine a mastery of the prescribed sources with a firm grasp of the context of the Persian Wars. Thus a familiarity with Herodotus and Aeschylus, as well as confidence to deploy the relevant visual material, was a necessity.

This paper attracted some excellent responses, with many candidates engaging with the idea of the 'invention of the barbarian'. There were no obvious problems with timing, as nearly all candidates were able to answer the full range of questions. Some chose to answer the essay question first, and this was a valid way to approach the exam. In general, the stimulus material in the 10-mark questions seemed to encourage candidates to write a lot, and many would have benefited from a more succinct approach in order to give themselves more time for the 20- and 30-mark questions.

Many candidates had developed a detailed knowledge and understanding of the subject, and this was especially evident in the question on 'The Persians'. Most candidates recognised that the 20-mark question was a 'to what extent' question, and were able to look at a range of factors. In the 30-mark questions, the deployment of scholarly opinions was generally evident, but it was rare to see candidates do much more than quote them. Examiners often looked without success for any evidence of the critical analysis of these scholars.

The essays were a familiar mixture of successful and less-successful. Examiners were impressed by the presence of a number of clearly argued and well-structured discussions of the topic, with excellent AO1 material being analysed in a perceptive way for AO2. More commonly there was a tendency on the part of candidates to write a summary of everything that they knew, only reaching a value judgement in the concluding paragraph. As a result, there tended to be imbalance in the levels, with many essays receiving a higher level for AO1 than they did for AO2. This may have been a result of the essay topics taking some candidates by surprise. Candidates should be reminded to answer the question that they have been set.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● made close reference to the source in Questions 3 and 6 ● showed an awareness of the different interpretations over Aeschylus' motives for Question 7 ● made excellent deployment of evidence from the visual sources in Question 8 ● showed appreciation of the nature of polis identity and Hellenic culture in Question 9. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● had a tendency to narrate the main events of 'The Persians' rather than show a critical perspective ● did not support 30-mark essays with a range of detailed evidence ● tended to deploy scholars but did not use them critically.

Section A overview

Candidates' work in Section A was characterised by a reasonably sound understanding of the material, although the depth of knowledge needed to secure the highest marks was often missing. There were still, however, a number of candidates who did not read the questions carefully enough.

The majority of candidates tackled Section A before Section B, and had clearly planned well enough to allow for sufficient time to complete the 30-mark essay.

Question 1

- 1 What is the name given to the type of pot in **Source A**? [1]

Nearly all responses were correct, although some misnamed it as a krater.

Question 2

- 2 What is the name given to the circular image painted on the inside of the pot in **Source A**? [1]

Few candidates knew this answer.

Question 3

- 3 Explain how **Source A** is typical of the way that the Greeks chose to portray Persians. [10]

It might seem an obvious point, but the most successful candidates used the source in order to answer the question. By identifying what they could actually see on the kylix, they could draw out points about the typicality of the portrayal. The best responses maintained a focus on the Persian figure in the image, making sure that they had a wide range of points rather than just a couple. Some candidates wrote at length about Greek portrayals of Greeks, but this meant that they found it difficult to maintain a clear focus on the question as a result.

Assessment for learning



This type of question asks for candidates to focus on the source. The aim is that they mainly answer the question through the use of the source itself rather than drawing in multiple examples from other sources.

Question 4

4 In which city was *The Persians* first performed? [1]

Almost universally correctly answered.

Question 5

5 Name Xerxes' father and mother. [2]

Nearly all candidates answered this correctly.

Question 6

6 Explain how Aeschylus creates sympathy for Xerxes and his people in **Source B**. [10]

The question required an analysis of **both** Xerxes and his people, but this was missed by some candidates. The most successful responses identified ways in which sympathy was created for Xerxes, as well as for his people. Even though the passage offers a wide range of possible points, there was an assumption on the part of some candidates that Aeschylus' sole aim was to garner sympathy for Xerxes and the Persians. There needed to be a recognition that Aeschylus might have had other aims (such as mockery or hatred).

Misconception



Many candidates took the question as a statement of fact, and seemed to think that everything Aeschylus wrote was intended to create sympathy in his audience's mind. Although this is a possible interpretation, there needed to be an understanding that this was a Greek writer writing for a Greek audience, and constructing a fictionalised image of the Persian court.

Question 7*

7* Assess to what extent Aeschylus focuses on 'un-Greekness' in *The Persians*.

You may use **Source B** as a starting point in your answer.

[20]

This question was answered less successfully when candidates either treated it solely as a list of examples of 'un-Greekness', or confined their discussions purely to Source B. These responses were difficult to reward above Level 3, as they either offered too narrow a range of evidence for AO1, or had not displayed 'critical analysis, interpretation and evaluation' in AO2.

The focus of the question was 'to what extent', and the best responses engaged with Aeschylus' intentions very effectively. By framing their response as an examination of this, they were able to analyse where Aeschylus had a focus on 'un-Greekness', and then juxtapose that against the other reasons he might have written the play (see Exemplar 1). It was also pleasing to see that many candidates took the question advice seriously, using Source B as a starting point, and then extending their responses into the rest of the play.

Exemplar 1

⑦	.	<p>In Aeschylus' <i>The Persians</i>, the focus can indeed be argued to be mainly on the 'un-Greekness' of the Persians, depicted through their luxuriousness and excess in both material and cultural matters, and also through the characterisation of Xerxes - particularly 'un-Greek' character and monarch. However, Aeschylus does also place a considerable amount of focus on the depiction of Greeks, in particular the depiction of Athenians, especially in the play, playing in to the sense of Athenian pride and propaganda after the victory at Salamis. It is however more focused on un-Greekness than Greekness.</p>
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Section B overview

The majority of candidates answered Question 8, but there were also plenty who chose Question 9. In Question 8 there was a very clear understanding of the main actions of the Achaemenids, which fitted well with some candidates' impressive learning about the reality of Persia. AO1 and AO2 tended to be more effectively deployed for Question 8 than for Question 9. Despite there being a broad range of material to draw on for Question 9, many of those who answered it did not display the level of knowledge expected for AO1 to help them to construct a persuasive argument.

As in previous examination seasons, the use of modern scholarship was an issue in both questions. While examiners were impressed to see scholars being cited, and sometimes being tied to an argument, there was less sign of scholarly opinions being critically analysed. The majority of responses quoted a scholar without offering a view as to why their opinion might or might not be persuasive. As observed in previous examiners' reports, for essays that had reached Level 4 or Level 5 in AO2, examiners were not always able to award the highest marks in the level because of a lack of critical analysis of the scholars.

Question 8*

Use classical sources, and secondary sources, scholars and/or academic works to support your argument. You should also consider possible interpretations of sources by different audiences.

8* 'The most successful king of the Achaemenid dynasty between 550 BC and 465 BC was Darius.'

Explain how far you agree with this statement. Justify your response.

[30]

This was a comparative question, and examiners were able to best reward candidates who chose one Achaemenid king and then explained why he was more successful than the others (see Exemplar 2). Most candidates argued for either Darius or Cyrus, and this was supported by both the visual sources and a knowledge of the reality of Persia. Direct comparison of their achievements (for example, militarily, in bureaucracy, or in building) allowed a clear distinction to be drawn between the different kings. Many candidates used the Cyrus Cylinder and his tomb to make plausible points about Cyrus' rule, and then compared that to Darius through the Bisitun relief, Persepolis and the statue from Susa. The most effective responses also interrogated that evidence to identify areas of propaganda within the portrayals. Most candidates also used Herodotus' portrayal of Xerxes, although they were less effective at interrogating Herodotus' reliability.

The less successful responses fell into two categories. In some the comparison was limited to two monarchs only, and this was particularly ineffective when Darius was being compared to Xerxes. The other type of response was a narration of the events of each reign, which made it difficult for examiners to find an argument in response to the question.

Exemplar 2

8		<p><i>I would marginally disagree with this statement, as though Darius oversaw the expansion of the empire and the undertaking of new building projects, Cyrus expanded the empire far faster than any other king, and set the standard for Persian kingship through his propaganda. I will also go on to briefly discuss the successes of other kings like Cambyses and Xerxes, though I find them largely insignificant in comparison. I will assess 'success' here not only by the expansion</i></p>
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The candidate in Exemplar 2 chose one Achaemenid king and then explained why he was more successful than the others.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should look for clues to the *style* of question in the wording used in the question. The presence of the phrase 'most successful' in Question 8 gives the prompt that candidates should be making a comparison between a number of other kings.

Question 9*

9* 'To be considered fully "Greek" you had to live on mainland Greece.'

Explain how far you agree with this statement. Justify your response.

[30]

While there were some very successful responses to this question, there were many that had long sections which were not relevant. Where candidates were effective in answering this question, it was because they focused carefully on what is meant by 'Greek'. Recognising that this concept was somewhat tentative in the 5th century helped candidates identify a range of other things that knit the Greeks together. Scholarly views (for example from the likes of Cartledge and Hall) helped considerably in constructing an argument on this (see Exemplar 3).

Less successful responses interpreted this as a question about 'barbarians'. Some wrote extensively about the nature of Amazons and Medea, but did not find a persuasive way of tying this into the question. Many others saw this as a question about motives for medising, and while some were able to apply that to a coherent overall argument, there were many others who did not make a clear link.

Exemplar 3

on Greek land. Critic Edith Hall claims that "the difference (between Greeks and barbarians) was linguistic and political" and though there is ~~and~~ strong evidence for this, the land in which Greeks inhabited seemed to be of greater importance. Persian occupation of Greek cities or land was clearly an uncomfortable presence and as Critic Green states that "there was a strong sense of Greece as a nation" and the land you inhabited was key in defining such a nation. Various

The candidate in Exemplar 3 has referred to the work of Edith Hall to help construct their argument.

Assessment for learning



Candidates had a different style of question here from Question 8. 'Explain how far' requires an evaluative judgement to be offered. This is most effective when offered at the start of the essay and then supported through to a conclusion.

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