

# **2000 HSC Notes from the Examination Centre Ancient History**

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# Ancient History

## 2 Unit Personalities and their times

### Section I – Ancient Societies

There was a marked improvement in the standard of answers this year. Students were writing more extended responses, particularly in the empathy question.

The most popular society was Sparta, followed by both Old and New Kingdom Egypt. The least popular were Assyria and Israel, though some of these responses were the most impressive.

Some recurring problems included the lack of understanding of historical / archaeological terms and concepts. Confusion reigned over Capitol / Capital and Agora / Parthenon. Religious concepts / beliefs / practices in most societies were not well understood. Teachers should emphasise the differences in many aspects of society between Old and New Kingdoms, especially religious and funerary beliefs and practices.

### Section II – Personalities and Groups

The popularity of the personalities and groups has remained the same. Hatshepsut, Xerxes, Alexander, Caesar and Agrippina remain the favourite personalities. A growth in the number of candidates attempting Jezebel and Cleopatra has been noticed.

The general standard remains similar to that of previous years. A polarisation between the well-prepared candidates conversant with the requirements of the syllabus, and candidates who provided general and vague responses, was evident.

Better-prepared candidates were able to write at length and provided a wealth of knowledge in response to question (e). This question requires synthesis, analysis and evaluation. Reference to primary and secondary sources however has declined and once again remained the domain / practice of the better-prepared candidate. Average to below average candidates had difficulty with questions that were open ended, for example question (a) in Pharaohs in the Old Kingdom and question (c) on Caesar.

Generally, the majority of candidates attempted to provide information that was relevant and pertinent to the questions asked.

## 2/3 Unit (Common)

### Section I – Ancient Societies

#### Part A – Egypt

The most popular responses were Question 1(a) and Questions 3(b) and 3(c). Many candidates were able to cite a variety of both secondary and primary evidence. The very best responses to Question 3(b) went beyond the political sphere and linked the cult of Amun to the wider religious and social framework of New Kingdom Egypt.

#### Part B – Near East

The most popular responses here were Questions 4(a), 5(b) and 6(b). Evidence was very well utilised by candidates in the latter. However, there were some responses to 5(b), which relied solely on the Biblical text and failed to include secondary sources.

#### Part C – Greece

The majority of candidates focused on the Spartan Society, in particular question 9(b). Minoan Society was as popular as it had been in the past whilst Athenian Society and Mycenaean Society were almost parallel in their number of responses.

Most answers were of a good standard. Above average responses showed a good understanding and use of source material and appropriate secondary opinion. Average responses tended to be more descriptive and narrative whereas those of a below average nature showed little relevant recognition of the set question.

#### Part D – Rome

The number of candidates attempting a Roman Society question was just over 10% of the total, which was a slight increase on last year. Generally candidates made a genuine attempt to answer the question and made some attempt to refer to both ancient and modern sources. Although the questions required considerable analysis most candidates were able to display a basic understanding of the issues and provided detailed information to support their conclusions. Weaker candidates wrote in very general terms, seemingly based on topics covered in the junior school. Roman Society in the Early Empire was once again more popular than Republican Society. The most popular questions were on the importance of slaves and one other aspect in the Republic and the imperial cult in Rome and the provinces.

### Section II – Personalities and Groups

#### Part E – Egypt

The most popular choices in this section were Hatshepsut and Akhenaten. The best answers contained well-structured arguments and extensive use of both primary and secondary sources.

Weaker responses contained unsupported generalisations and candidates failed to understand such terms as “economy” in Old Kingdom Egypt.

Many candidates wrote several pages for part (a) and did not leave enough time for parts (b) and (c) which require greater depth.

#### **Part F – The Near East**

Xerxes continues to be the most popular personality in this section. Again better candidates used primary and secondary sources well.

Weaker candidates had difficulty with the terms “consolidate”, “accession” and “legacy”.

Prepared answers that did not match the question on the paper were also apparent.

#### **Part G – Greece**

There has been a marked increase in the number of candidates studying Cleopatra VII and also Pericles and Alexander. Fewer candidates chose Women in Classical Greece.

Good candidates were able to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the personality chosen in the context of their times. For example the “impact” referred to in Question 23 (b) (Cleopatra) cannot be successfully answered without thorough knowledge of Roman, Egyptian and Greek history.

#### **Part H – Rome**

The most popular personalities in this section were Agrippina and Caesar. Responses to the questions on Caesar showed an admirable knowledge of Caesar’s career as well as a very real understanding of the significance of his actions within the framework of contemporary Roman political life. The better responses made extensive use of a wide range of primary and secondary sources.

Again many candidates spent too much time on part (a) and did not leave enough time for the other parts, which have a greater mark value.

### **Section III – Historical Periods**

#### **Part J – Egypt**

In this section of the paper candidates overall, this year, presented well-prepared answers, demonstrating a very good knowledge of syllabus requirements. Responses in the “excellent” range gave well-balanced arguments supported by primary sources and citing modern scholarship. “Above average” answers usually lacked the sophistication of argument that the excellent responses sustained while “average” answers tended to be detailed but narrative in style.

The Old Kingdom questions were difficult and candidates struggled to come to grips with them. There were few excellent responses. The majority of answers fell in the average range and tended to be narratives on pyramid building, or the decline of the Old Kingdom.

Question 33 was a very popular question with parts (a) and (c) attracting the majority of answers. Candidates presented detailed answers again well supported by evidence. The best answers were able to present, and sustain, a sophisticated argument in response to the question asked. These arguments were well supported by evidence cited appropriately.

### **Part K – The Near East**

There were very few candidates attempting answers in questions 34, 35 and 36 in comparison to other years. The most popular question in this section was question 37, which attracted larger numbers than in previous years.

Parts (a) and (b) were most popular. Candidates however tended for part (a) to concentrate on “how” Cyrus acquired his empire ignoring the “why”. Better responses were able to give a balanced answer to this question. Part (b) attracted mainly average responses with candidates merely describing the composition of the Persian army, using source R as a stimulus, and ignoring the second part of the question entirely. As in part (a), better responses were able to give a balanced answer to all “three” parts of the question. Weaker responses merely rephrased the source printed on the examination paper. Part (c) proved least popular. Candidates concentrated on a description of Alexanders’ victories rather than accounting for the Persian failure to resist his invasions.

### **Part L – Greece**

The most popular question was 39(a) - The Persian Wars. Most answers were narratives with very little reference to the question.

Better candidates used sources well but weaker candidates quoted course textbooks inappropriately. Weaker candidates described and narrated where discussion and analysis were required. There was also evidence of prepared answers. Eg. The results of colonisation were often treated as the causes of colonisation.

This was also the case in question 39(b) where “advantages” and “disadvantages” became ways in which the Delian League became the Athenian Empire.

### **Part M – Rome**

The most popular question in this section was Question 46. Many candidates struggled with question (a) with candidates simply describing the objects and buildings rather than analysing their significance in relation to the question asked. Part (c) was well done with candidates addressing the source and using recent modern scholarships to answer the question.

## 3 Unit (Additional)

### **Section I - Tombs And Burial Customs Of Old Kingdom And New Kingdom Egypt**

#### **Question 1**

The most popular choices were 1(a), 1(c) and 1(e). The better responses for 1(a) were able to effectively discuss the historical origins of the Step Pyramid. Some candidates, however, saw the latter as an opportunity to give a general overview of the Step Pyramid complex. In Question 1(c), students often confused Old Kingdom nobles tombs with those of the New Kingdom and chose to elaborate on a variety of tomb scenes instead of focussing on those that were agricultural.

#### **Question 2 – Essays**

The most popular question on this year's paper was (b) with (a) the next most answered question. A small percentage of candidates attempted (c).

There was overall, a pleasing use of primary sources as evidence this year, such as the names of Viziers and details of their tombs (a).

Superior answers to these questions demonstrated a clear understanding of the question and the ability to maintain a balance between discussions of Old and New Kingdom material. These answers were well constructed and supported by use of specific and relevant evidence from both periods. In question (b) better students included Amarna deviations from the norm and used this material as argument.

Weaker answers tended to focus on either Old Kingdom or New Kingdom material and often generalised too much about the nature of the differences and/or similarities between the periods without citing relevant evidence.

Another area in which some students still tend to have problems is in the use of secondary sources. Many students 'sprinkle' their essays with modern text book writers' names as sources, rather than using the evidence of primary or more scholarly sources, which would be expected of students at 3 Unit Level.

### **Section II – The Athenian Agora from Mycenaean Times to AD 267**

#### **Question 3**

The numbers for this 3 Unit topic have remained steady and the standard remains high.

Some candidates experienced problems in answering (c) although it was very popular.

Others found difficulty in explaining the term "economic" in relation to fountain houses and water supply in the Agora. Overall candidates demonstrated a very detailed knowledge of the Agora with good use of archaeological and written evidence.

#### **Question 4**

The majority of candidates wrote responses containing detailed material indicating an excellent knowledge across the whole area of study. Candidates used primary and secondary evidence accurately and even weaker candidates indicated a pleasing knowledge. The most popular response was Question 4(b) on religion.

### **Section III – Roman Britain AD 43 - 410**

#### **Question 5**

In the final year of 3 Unit and Roman Britain, there were fewer responses than in previous years, yet the standard was pleasing. Most candidates showed a sound understanding of Roman Britain and made effective reference to archaeological and written evidence as well as modern scholars.

The most popular questions were (d) and (e). Many candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of the topics and made excellent reference to a variety of evidence.

#### **Question 6**

The standard of responses to this year's questions was very good. Candidates expressed themselves clearly and displayed a detailed knowledge of the topics. Better responses attempted to discuss and explain the information presented in terms of the question asked. There was also an extensive use of ancient, modern and archaeological evidence in these responses. Most candidates answered the question on the revolt of AD 61 in Britain and most displayed a good understanding of the topic.

### **Section IV – The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah**

#### **Question 7**

Set Books – Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah

The most popular choices were 7(c), 7(d), 7(e) and 7(f). Many candidates displayed a sound knowledge of secondary and primary sources in what were largely very fine responses.

#### **Question 8**

Most candidates chose 8(a) or 8(b) and gave excellent answers. The use and understanding of a wide variety of secondary and primary sources was most commendable.

### **Section V – The Peloponnesian War**

#### **Question 9 – Set Books – Thucydides**

Overall the candidature seemed stronger than in previous years. Good candidates displayed solid knowledge of the text and the problems and issues associated with the question or gobbet. Fewer relied on secondary textbooks for their information and citation.

The most popular questions attempted in this Section were (b) and (c).

Strong candidates displayed solid knowledge of the text, were less reliant on uncritical secondary sources (Kagan; Bury-Meiggs) and adopted a critical and analytical approach both to the text and scholarship. Some, especially in (f) used a range of examples from different books to support their arguments about Thucydides' purpose.

Weaker candidates either repeated the gobbet in the text, failed to identify the gobbet, wrote a narrative, gave a "shopping list" of secondary sources when citation of Thucydides as the original source would have been sufficient, or wrote a prepared answer on speeches and method for 9(f).

### **Question 10**

The majority of candidates answered question (a) but the most consistently well answered was (c).

The responses were longer this year with candidates writing 6 – 8 pages. Overall candidates had a good knowledge of the primary source and there were fewer references to secondary sources.

Most candidates developed sound historical arguments but there was also evidence of prepared answers that had to be modified for a wider question.

## **Section VI – The Julio-Claudians**

### **Question 11 – Set Books – Tacitus, The Annals**

This year the gobbets were generally well answered and displayed a detailed knowledge of Tacitus as well as other primary sources.

There were many candidates who had obviously concentrated heavily on the reign of Tiberius rather than the whole Julio-Claudian period. The most popular gobbets were (a), (b) and (f). The better candidates were able to demonstrate the changing relations of Tiberius with the Senate and Germanicus. They made judicious reference to Tacitus and supported their arguments with knowledge of modern scholars.

The weaker candidates tended to narrate the events of Tiberius' reign with little reference to the text. Many answers to (f) were limited because they only gave examples of Tacitus' writings from the reign of Tiberius. Overall, the responses to (c) and (d) tended to be narrative rather than analytical. There were only a few responses to (e).

### **Question 12**

In this the final year of 3 Unit, Tacitus, the essays on the Julio-Claudians were of a pleasingly high standard.

Options (a) and (b) attracted about the same number of candidates and most responses were well directed towards the question. Many candidates made excellent use of



primary sources and recent historiography integrating these opinions to support their argument.

Option (c) attracted some responses but most was unable to give much more than a superficial treatment. Some candidates tried to convert slavery into freedmen to give themselves something more substantial on which to write.