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Sample assessment 2020

Stimulus book

Ancient History



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Source 1

Excerpt from *The Age of Augustus*

[Under the leadership of Augustus] the [Roman] empire attained previously unknown levels of might, stability, and prestige both internally and externally ... The Senate and People of Rome had recognized his unparalleled achievements by devising entirely new honors for him. The Senate ... adorned the entrance to his house with laurel trees and the civic crown. It also placed on display in the Curia Iulia, the chamber where it met, a golden shield engraved with Augustus' virtues: *virtus* (valor), *clementia* (clemency), *iustitia* (justice), and *pietas* (piety; observance of one's duty toward both gods and fellow men) ... [Augustus'] being uniquely distinguished for these virtues is stated to be the justification of his exalted rank. Bestowal of the title 'father of the country' (*pater patriae*) was the logical consequence and final proof of his supreme position as princeps, the first man in the state [of Rome].

...

After his death Romans also discussed the extraordinary position he [Augustus] had occupied: his unparalleled 13 elections to the consulate, his 21 acclamations¹ as *imperator* (victorious commander), and the new honors invented especially for him.

Source: Eck, W 2007, *The Age of Augustus*, 2nd edn, trans. DL Schneider, Blackwell, Malden, USA, pp. 2–3.

Context statement

The author of the text, Werner Eck, is a professor of Ancient History at the University of Cologne. Eck's main field of research and publication is Roman history, particularly the imperial period.

¹ a traditional and ritual show of approval in Ancient Rome

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Source 2

Excerpt from *Ode XV* in ‘The fourth book of the odes of Horace’

To Augustus, on the restoration of peace.

...

Your age, O Caesar, hath both restored plenteous crops to the fields, and has brought back ... the Roman standards¹, torn from the proud pillars of the Parthians²; and has shut up the temple of Janus³ ... now free from war; and has imposed a due discipline upon headstrong licentiousness⁴, and has ... [eradicated] crimes, and recalled the ancient arts; by which the Latin name and strength of Italy have increased, and the fame and majesty of the empire are extended, from the sun’s western bed, even to the east. While Caesar is at the head of affairs, neither civil rage, nor violence, shall disturb the general tranquillity; nor hatred, which forges swords ...

Source: Horace, *Ode XV*, in ‘The fourth book of the odes of Horace’, in C Smart (ed./trans.) 1821, *The Works of Horace: Translated literally into English prose*, Vol. I, Evert Duyckinck et al., New York, pp. 271–273.

Context statement

The author of this text, Horace (65 BCE – 8 BCE), was a Roman lyric poet. Maecenas (friend of Augustus and patron of poets) introduced Horace to Augustus. This ode is believed to have been written in 13 BCE.

1 pennants, flags or banners that identified a Roman legion (infantry)

2 the Parthian Empire included parts of modern Turkey and Iran

3 the Roman god of beginnings, gates and endings; presided over the beginning and ending of a conflict

4 a lack of moral restraint

Source 3

Picture of Augustus statue from Prima Porta



Source: Niermann, T 2007, *Augustus of Prima Porta*, Wikimedia Commons.

Context statement

Dated to the early 1st century CE, this statue was found in Prima Porta (a suburb of Rome) in the ruins of the home of Augustus's wife, Livia. The statue is often presumed to have been commissioned by the Senate. The person depicted in the statue is Augustus. The reliefs (images) on Augustus's breastplate are generally thought to show the return from Parthia of the Roman standards lost by Crassus¹ at the Battle of Carrhae² in 53 BCE.

1 the name of a Roman general and politician

2 a significant battle between the armies of the Parthian Empire and the Roman Empire

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Source 4

Excerpt from ‘Octavius Caesar Augustus’ in *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*

He conquered, however, partly in person, and partly by his lieutenants¹, Cantabria, Aquitania and Pannonia, Dalmatia, with all Illyricum and Rhaetia, besides the two Alpine nations, the Vindelici and the Salassii. He also checked the incursions of the Dacians, by cutting off three of their generals with vast armies, and drove the Germans beyond the river Elbe; removing two other tribes who submitted, the Ubii and Sicambri, into Gaul, and settling them in the country bordering on the Rhine. Other nations also, which broke into revolt, he reduced to submission. But he never made war upon any nation without just and necessary cause; and was so far from being ambitious either to extend the empire, or advance his own military glory, that he obliged the chiefs of some barbarous tribes to swear in the temple of Mars the Avenger, that they would faithfully observe their engagements, and not violate the peace which they had implored. Of some he demanded a new description of hostages, their women, having found from experience that they cared little for their men when given as hostages; but he always afforded them the means of getting back their hostages whenever they wished it.

Source: Suetonius, ‘D. Octavius Caesar Augustus’, Chapter 2, Section XXI, in *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, trans. A Thomson, Gebbie & Co, Philadelphia, USA, 1883, pp. 89–90.

Context statement

Suetonius (c. 69 CE – after 122 CE) was secretary to the emperor Hadrian. In this position, he had access to the imperial archives. His work *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars* is a series of biographies of Roman leaders from Julius Caesar to Domitian. It gives an account of their public and private lives, including their faults.

¹ in this context, a military officer who acts for their superior

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Source 5

Excerpt from ‘Roman Empire’ in *The Geography of Strabo*

The division into provinces has varied at different periods, but at present it is that established by Augustus Caesar; for after the sovereign power had been conferred upon him by his country for life, and he had become the arbiter of peace and war, he divided the whole empire into two parts, one of which he reserved to himself, the other he assigned to the (Roman) people. The former [areas reserved for himself] consisted of such parts as required military defence, and were barbarian, or bordered upon nations not as yet subdued, or were barren and uncultivated, which though ill provided with everything else, were yet well furnished with strongholds, and might thus dispose the inhabitants to throw off the yoke and rebel. All the rest, which were peaceable countries, and easily governed without the assistance of arms, were given over to the (Roman) people.

Source: Strabo, ‘Roman Empire’, Book XVII, Chapter III, Section 25, in *The Geography of Strabo: Literally translated, with notes*, Vol. III, trans. HC Hamilton and W Falconer, Henry G Bohn, London, 1857, pp. 296–297.

Context statement

Strabo (c. 63 BCE – 23 CE) was a Greek geographer, philosopher and historian who was educated in Rome. He wrote *Geography*, drawing on personal travels and the work of many earlier writers. *Geography* details the physical and political geography of known regions of the world in his era.

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Source 6

Syme's account of Augustus in *The Roman Revolution*

The historical record of the wars of Augustus is fragmentary and capricious.¹ Design has conspired with accident, for the Princeps intended that the military achievements of his rule should be glorified at the expense of their real but subordinate authors. Many important military operations are barely known, other campaigns no doubt have lapsed into oblivion. No complete record exists either of governors of the military provinces or of the careers of the most eminent generals and administrators in the New State.

Source: Syme, R 1939, *The Roman Revolution*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 397.

Context statement

Ronald Syme (1903–1989) was a New Zealand–born Oxford University historian who wrote many books on Roman history. His book *The Roman Revolution*, published in 1939 during the rise of fascism² in Europe, challenged prevailing views of Augustus at the time.

1 given to sudden and unaccountable changes of mood or behaviour

2 a system of government in which people are led by a dictator who has complete power and forcibly suppresses opposition and criticism

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Acknowledgments

Source 1: Excerpt from *The Age of Augustus*

Werner Eck, *The Age of Augustus*

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