Historical sources

A historical sources book containing seen and unseen primary and secondary sources will be provided in the examination for Paper Two.

You must use a range of seen and unseen sources and reference them in your response.

The seen sources are overleaf. Researching the primary authors of these sources is likely to enhance your ability to provide evidence of evaluation.

Enquiries

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Roman tyrants — General

Source A — Tacitus, *Annals*, book 1

When Rome was first a city, its rulers were kings. Then Lucius Junius Brutus created the consulate and free Republican institutions in general. Dictatorships were assumed in emergencies. A Council of Ten did not last more than two years; and then there was a short-lived arrangement by which senior army officers — the commanders of contingents provided by the tribes — possessed consular authority. Subsequently Cinna and Sulla set up autocracies, but they too were brief. Soon Pompey and Crassus acquired predominant positions, but rapidly lost them to Caesar. Next, the military strength which Lepidus and Antony had built up was absorbed by Augustus. He found the whole state exhausted by internal dissensions, and established over it a personal régime known as the Principate.

Famous writers have recorded Rome's early glories and disasters. The Augustan Age, too, had its distinguished historians. But then the rising tide of flattery exercised a deterrent effect. The reigns of Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius, and Nero were described during their lifetimes in fictitious terms, for fear of the consequences; whereas the accounts written after their deaths were influenced by still raging animosities. So I have decided to say a little about Augustus, with special attention to his last period, and then go on to the reign of Tiberius and what followed. I shall write without indignation or partisanship: in my case the customary incentives to these are lacking.

The violent deaths of Brutus and Cassius left no Republican forces in the field. Defeat came to Sextus Pompeius in Sicily, Lepidus was dropped. Antony killed. So even the Caesarian party had no leader left except the 'Caesar' himself, Octavian. He gave up the title of Triumvir, emphasizing instead his position as consul; and the powers of a tribune, he proclaimed, were good enough for him — powers for the protection of ordinary people.

He seduced the army with bonuses, and his cheap food policy was successful bait for civilians. Indeed, he attracted everybody's goodwill by the enjoyable gift of peace. Then he gradually pushed ahead and absorbed the functions of the senate, the officials, and even the law. Opposition did not exist. War or judicial murder had disposed of all men of spirit. Upper-class survivors found that slavish obedience was the way to succeed, both politically and financially. They had profited from the revolution, and so now they liked the security of the existing arrangement better than the dangerous uncertainties of the old régime. Besides, the new order was popular in the provinces. There, government by Senate and People was looked upon sceptically as a matter of sparring dignitaries and extortionate officials. The legal system had provided no remedy against these, since it was wholly incapacitated by violence, favouritism, and — most of all — bribery.

Source B —
Augustus, Res Gestae [The Deeds of the Divine Augustus]

A copy below of the deeds of the divine Augustus, by which he subjected the whole
wide earth to the rule of the Roman people, and of the money which he spent for the
state and Roman people, inscribed on two bronze pillars, which are set up in Rome.

1. In my nineteenth year, on my own initiative and at my own expense, I raised an
army with which I set free the state, which was oppressed by the domination of a
faction. For that reason, the senate enrolled me in its order by laudatory resolutions,
when Gaits Pansa and Aulis Hirtius were consuls (43 B.C.E.), assigning me the place
of a consul in the giving of opinions, and gave me the imperium. With me as
propraetor, it ordered me, together with the consuls, to take care lest any detriment
befall the state. But the people made me consul in the same year, when the consuls
each perished in battle, and they made me a triumvir for the settling of the state.

6. When Marcus Vinicius and Quintus Lucretius were consuls (19 B.C.E.), then again
when Publius Lentulus and Gnaeus Lentulus were consuls (18 B.C.E.), and third when
Paulius Fabius Maximus and Quintus Tubero were consuls (11 B.C.E.), although the
senate and Roman people consented that I alone be made curator of the laws and
customs with the highest power, I received no magistracy offered contrary to the
customs of the ancestors. What the senate then wanted to accomplish through me, I did
through tribunician power, and five times on my own accord I both requested and
received from the senate a colleague in such power.

15. I paid to the Roman plebs HS300 [HS is sesterces] per man from my father’s will
and in my own name gave HS 400 from the spoils of war when I was consul for the
fifth time (29 B.C.E.); furthermore, I again paid out a public gift of HS 400 per man, in
my tenth consulate (24 B.C.E.), from my own patrimony; and, when consul for the
eleventh time (23 B.C.E.), twelve doles of grain personally bought were measured out;
and in my twelfth year of tribunician power (12–11 B.C.E.) I gave HS 400 per man for
the third time. And these public gifts of mine never reached fewer than 250,000 men.
In my eighteenth year of tribunician power, as consul for the twelfth time (5 B.C.E.), I
gave to 320,000 plebs of the city HS 240 per man. And, when consul the fifth time (29
B.C.E.), I gave from my war-spoils to colonies of my soldiers each HS 1000 per man;
about 120,000 men in the colonies received this triumphal public gift. Consul for the
thirteenth time (2 B.C.E.), I gave HS 240 to the plebs who then received the public
grain; they were a few more than 200,000.

20. I rebuilt the Capitol and the theatre of Pompey, each work at enormous cost,
without any inscription of my name. I rebuilt aqueducts in many places that had
decayed with age, and I doubled the capacity of the Marcian aqueduct by sending a
new spring into its channel. I completed the Forum of Julius and the basilica which he
built between the temple of Castor and the temple of Saturn, works begun and almost
finished by my father. When the same basilica was burned with fire I expanded its
grounds and I began it under an inscription of the name of my sons, and, if I should not
complete it alive, I ordered it to be completed by my heirs. Consul for the sixth time
(28 B.C.E.), I rebuilt eighty-two temples of the gods in the city by the authority of the
senate, omitting nothing which ought to have been rebuilt at that time. Consul for the
seventh time (27 B.C.E.), I rebuilt the Flaminian road from the city to Ariminum and
all the bridges except the Mulvian and Minucian.

22. Three times I gave shows of gladiators under my name and five times under the
name of my sons and grandsons; in these shows about 10,000 men fought. Twice I
furnished under my name spectacles of athletes gathered from everywhere, and three
times under my grandson’s name. I celebrated games under my name four times, and furthermore in the place of other magistrates twenty-three times. As master of the college I celebrated the secular games for the college of the Fifteen, with my colleague Marcus Agrippa, when Gaius Furnius and Gaius Silanus were consuls (17 B.C.E.). Consul for the thirteenth time (2 B.C.E.), I celebrated the first games of Mas, which after that time thereafter in following years, by a senate decree and a law, the consuls were to celebrate. Twenty-six times, under my name or that of my sons and grandsons, I gave the people hunts of African beasts in the circus, in the open, or in the amphitheatre; in them about 3,500 beasts were killed.

34. In my sixth and seventh consulates (28–27 B.C.E.), after putting out the civil war, having obtained all things by universal consent, I handed over the state from my power to the dominion of the senate and Roman people. And for this merit of mine, by a senate decree, I was called Augustus and the doors of my temple were publicly clothed with laurel and a civic crown was fixed over my door and a gold shield placed in the Julian senate-house, and the inscription of that shield testified to the virtue, mercy, justice, and piety, for which the senate and Roman people gave it to me. After that time, I exceeded all in influence, but I had no greater power than the others who were colleagues with me in each magistracy.


Source C — Vergil, Aeneid, Book VI.ii.789-800, 847-853

Vergil’s Aeneid might be understood as one long paean, glorifying Rome, its founders, and its greatness in the Augustan age. How skillfully the courtly poet paid his tribute to the reigning Julii and especially to Augustus is shown in the following lines from the great Latin epic.

[Anchises, in the realms of the dead, is reciting to his son Aeneas the future glories of the Roman race.]

Lo! Caesar and all the Julian
Line, predestined to rise to the infinite spaces of heaven.
This, yea, this is the man, so often foretold you in promise,
Caesar Augustus, descended from God, who again shall a golden
Age in Latium found, in fields once governed by Saturn
Further than India’s hordes, or the Garymantian peoples
He shall extend his reign; there’s a land beyond all of our planets

Source D — Nicholas Shakespeare, (book review)
*Augustus: from Revolutionary to Emperor*

Goldsworthy is reassuringly open about the lack of evidence. Augustus’s own autobiography has not survived, nor his correspondence with the orator Cicero. Goldsworthy has to rely on sources like Suetonius and Tacitus, writing in the following century, and the historian Dio who lamented how hard it was to recount events in Augustus’s reign, “since so many key decisions were made in private and unrecorded, while much that was public was merely empty ceremony.” Tacitus complained that the writing of history withered under Augustus, “because of flattery”.

Shakespeare, N 2014, ‘Review of Augustus: from Revolutionary to Emperor by Adrian Goldsworthy’ [book review].

Source E — David L. Silverman, *Augustus*

On July 1 of that year he resigned the consulship. Thereafter he would hold it again only for ceremonial purposes, as e.g. in 5 and 3 BC to honour the entry of his grandsons Gaius and Lucius into public life. The centrepiece of the settlement of 23 was the adoption by Augustus of the office of tribune of the people, the tribunicia potestas, which he held thereafter continuously until his death in 14 AD. This is a bit tricky in so far as we hear on two previous occasions of Augustus taking the tribunician power, first in 36 BC (Appian, BC 5.132; Orosius, 6.18.34), and then again in 30 (Dio 51.19.6). However, Augustus clearly states in the Res Gestae (4.4) that his tribunician power began in 23. The likeliest explanation is that on the previous occasions he had been interested only in acquiring the tribunician inviolability (sacrosanctitas). In practical terms the tribunician power did not amount to much, except insofar as it allowed him to veto any public act and to propose measures directly to the popular assembly. But in symbolic terms its importance cannot be overstated. The tribunician power came to be identified completely with the office of the princeps, and Augustus and his successors, on their coins and public documents, date the years of their reigns by it. When Augustus sought to identify someone as his designated successor (a delicate business inasmuch as he had to avoid the appearance of creating a dynasty) he did so by taking that person as a colleague in the tribunician power. Tribunes of the people do not command armies. Augustus’ command of the armies was not, however, jeopardized by the settlement of 23. He was granted proconsular imperium (extended in 19 BC to a life term), and this was to be imperium maius quam proconsulare, which meant that he could overrule the authority of other provincial governors in their own provinces (Dio 53.32). Although there were (dubious) Republican precedents for the holding of maius imperium (Pompey had had it in the 60’s), Augustus’ was unique in that it did not stop at the pomerium, the sacred boundary of the city.

Source F —  
Matthew M. McGowan, *Caesar, princeps, Augustus, god*

Notably, he never took to the name Octavianus, as would have been customary among the Romans after such an adoption, but immediately began calling himself ‘Julius Caesar, the son of Julius Caesar’. Roman nomenclature is notoriously vexing*, and the confusion we may have today about the many names of Rome’s first emperor — ultimately called Imperator Caesar divi filius Augustus ‘Emperor Caesar Augustus, son of the deified (Caesar)’ — may also have been at play in antiquity. At the very least, the newly adopted ‘Caesar’ knew the power of that name to compel and to revile. Thus, in a letter composed less than a month after the assassination, Cicero writes: ‘his followers call him Caesar, but Philippus does not, so neither do I’. In the same letter, Cicero expresses doubts about the youth — ‘I’m sure he’s not a good citizen’ — and refers to him dismissively as ‘boy’ (puer), a term famously deployed by Antony to insult Octavian: ‘And you, boy, who owe everything to a name’. Of course, Antony was only partly right: a keen intellect and ruthlessness of purpose played a part in everything, too, and rivals underestimated him at their peril.

* The methods the Romans used for giving names is famously annoying.

McGowan, MM 2014, ‘Caesar, princeps, Augustus, god’.

Source G — *Oath of Allegiance to Augustus*

In the third year from the twelfth consulship of the Emperor Caesar Augustus, son of a god, March 6, at Gangra, the following oath was taken by the inhabitants of Paphlagonia and the Roman businessmen dwelling among them:

‘I swear by Jupiter, Earth, Sun, by all the gods and goddesses, and by Augustus himself, that I will be loyal to Caesar Augustus and to his children and descendants all my life in word, in deed, and in thought, regarding as friends whomever they so regard, and considering as enemies whomever they so adjudge; that in defence of their interests I will spare neither body, soul, life, nor children, but will in every way undergo every danger in defence of their interests; that whenever I perceive or hear anything being said or planned of done against them I will lodge information about this and will be an enemy to whoever says or plans or does any such thing; and that whomever they adjudge to be enemies I will by land and sea, with weapons and sword, pursue and punish’.

Source H — Name changes of Octavian/Augustus

63 BC: born Gaius Octavius.

44 BC: upon adoption, became Gaius Julius Caesar. (Contemporaries referred to him as ‘Caesar’. He dropped the name ‘Octavius’.

42 BC: Octavian added Divi Filiius (Son of the Divine), becoming Gaius Julius Caesar Divi Filiius.


27 BC: the Roman Senate voted new titles for him, officially becoming Imperator Caesar Divi Filiius Augustus.

Acknowledgements


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