Ancient History
2011 Senior External Examination — assessment report

Statistics

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Paper One

Part A: Reflections on the research inquiry process

Candidates generally performed very well in this part of the examination. Most provided good detail and demonstrated a clear understanding of the aspects of inquiry. Candidates exhibited progress in the development and detail of their ideas, as well as critically reflecting on research methodologies and pedagogies. Other observations follow.

- A marked improvement in candidates responding specifically to the Planning and using a historical research process criterion compared to previous years.
- More candidates developing specific focus questions related to the topic and theme rather than generic questions in response to Question 2.
- Further work could be done on responding more specifically to Question 3 and Question 5. Making general references to the internet is not appropriate for indicating what historical materials would be used in an initial investigation.
- There were a few instances where candidates repeated the same response to different questions. Responses need to be tailored specifically to the requirements of each question.

Part B: Extended written response to an unseen question

Candidates generally did well in this part of the paper, with knowledge and information centred on an argument that clearly responded to the selected question. (All candidates responded to the question on Cleopatra.) Although not explicitly required, it would have been beneficial for candidates to have mentioned issues such as reliability of sources to aid the validity of their own arguments, especially as the question on Cleopatra clearly mentioned the bias of Roman sources towards her. Other observations follow.

- The question required candidates to specifically refer to Roman sources in developing an argument about whether Cleopatra was an effective ruler.

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• The use of sources or reference to primary sources is essential in responding adequately to this part of the examination.

• Establishing historical context by referring to key dates is encouraged.

• High-achieving responses not only used Roman sources but also challenged the stereotypical view of Cleopatra.

• Adequate time was provided for candidates to respond to the question.

**Paper Two**

**Extended written response to historical evidence**

The majority of candidates responded to Question 2, which required a high degree of understanding and knowledge about how the Roman Republic functioned and how it was undermined by the actions of Marius and Sulla. The question required candidates to clearly decide and argue about whose contribution was greater and why. In general, this was not done in sufficient depth and detail. A number of candidates did not reveal the direction of their argument until the conclusion.

Too many short paragraphs also contributed to the staccato-like dropping of “general information bombs”. This contributed to a narrative or descriptive style of essay in which the relevance of the information given was not clear, rather than an essay that was evaluative and analytical.

Although the opportunity to evaluate sources was not really fully grasped, it was better than in previous years. No candidates responded to Question 1, which was unfortunate because it would have led to a more critically evaluative and source-based argument. The highest achieving essay, in response to Question 3, consistently linked information and source-based material to a core argument and has been published in this report as a VHA standard exemplar.

Four essential points that would assist in gaining a good result have been listed in previous Ancient History assessment reports. They are repeated here:

• use direct quotations from a range of sources

• use sources critically (do not just summarise)

• use sources in conjunction with your own historical knowledge

• make explicit use of unseen sources.

While candidates made more use of unseen source material this year than in the past, it was disappointing that many failed to use much of the seen material sent to candidates more than four weeks before the examination. Careful selection of sources and of text within sources is a priority if prospective candidates want to obtain a high level of achievement.

**Sample solutions**

The response that follows was selected from those scripts that met the A standard in all criteria in both papers. It has been reproduced exactly as written and therefore includes any spelling or grammatical errors made by the candidate.
Paper One

Part A

Part A — Reflections on the research inquiry process

Part A assesses your understanding and experience of Planning and using a historical research process (criterion 1 of the 2008 senior external syllabus for Ancient History).

Part A refers to an inquiry topic of your own choosing based on Theme 6 of the syllabus: "The influence of groups in ancient societies" (excluding Roman ancient societies). The regional area you choose in Part A must be different from the regional area you choose in Part B.

Suggested time allocation: 1 hour 15 minutes.

Respond to all questions. The amount of space provided for each response is an indication of how much you are expected to write.

Write the topic you selected for inquiry during your study:

Athenian women in the 5th century BCE, Greece...

Question 1

Comment on how your inquiry topic highlights some of the important elements of Theme 6: "The influence of groups in ancient societies".

Athenian women represented how many cultures throughout... history... women... The role... women... Ancient Athens... the... basis for... famous... works... and... due to... the... availability... of... sources... it... is... a... much... disputed... topic...

Question 2

List the five initial focus questions that you used to guide an investigation into your topic, based upon the aspects of inquiry below.

Definitions: What were the roles and opinions of women in Ancient Greece/Athens?

Sources: What sources are available about Athenian women... they... biased at all?

Backgrounds, changes and continuities — motives and causes: Was this view of Athenian women... continued... on... Greek cities...? Did this view of women ever change?...
Effects, interests and arguments: Are there any evidence to suggest that women were not in fact submissive? — Spartan women, prostitutes, etc.

Reflections and responses: Upon reflection of the source material, there may have been little evidence to support the initial hypothesis.

Question 3

With what historical materials (both archaeological and text) did you begin your initial investigation? Name actual authors, collections (including internet resource sites) and primary and secondary sources that are relevant to the topic.

Athenian Constitution

Lyceistrata (play) — Aristophanes

Odyssey (play) — Homer

Women in Ancient Greece (1999) — Sue Blundell

Internet — Wikipedia

Lycurgus (play)

Women of Troy (play) — Mendeal (play)

Pericles — Xenophanes, Aristophanes

Question 4

After the completion of the initial stage of investigation, what key research question did you develop and what was your initial hypothesis?

Key research question:

What were the opinions and views expressed about Athenian women in Ancient Greece and to what degree were these disputed?

Initial hypothesis:

That Athenian women were quiet and submissive for the most part and did their duties without question...
Question 5

Describe the plan that you used to guide your research over the next stage of investigation.

In your response, refer to:

- time frames (including drafting process)
- where you researched the topic
- the types of sources and resources considered that offer a range of perspectives.

This information can be represented in an appropriate format of your own choosing, such as a dot point summary, flow chart (visual organiser) or spidergram.

Sources/Resources:

Most sources are heavily biased—show women as "should be seen and not heard," take a very negative, sexist opinion of women. All sources from the time being studied were written by men, who treated women as the lower sex (*Hetarvae for our pleasure, maidservants for our daily care and wives to give us legitimate children). Some sources (particularly those about Hetarvae and Spartan women (lysisistrata) dispute this idea.
Question 6

Select one key challenge or opportunity that you encountered in the research of your chosen topic. Explain how you dealt with this challenge or opportunity.

Most sources are heavily biased. Made it a challenge to find more sources that disputed the way Athenian women are represented, but made a chance for serious revision of the representations of women.

Question 7

How did you revise and refine your initial focus questions and hypothesis to clearly show the development of your ideas?

Focus questions:

How accurate is the current view of... 
Athenian women... when the bias of...
prejudice sources is taken into consideration?

Besides the traditional "duties" of... they... 
were expected to perform... what other roles... 
did women have?

Were the majority of... women seen in this manner, or... just by the writers of the... time?

Hypothesis:

That... 

Women were not... as submissive... as... we... are... to... believe... They were much more... involved... as... revealed... through... Aristophanes... "Lysistrata"... and the accounts... of... the... lives of... the... Hetaerae... and... the... Spartan... women... (who... were seen as equal to men in all respects)...
Question 8

Define “critical reflection” in the context of historical inquiry.

"Critical reflection" is the... reflection that an author... does... on their own work at the end of the... research period. It includes all sources and source material and... highlights any errors... made during the process.

Question 9

Give examples of your critical reflection on your sources and on choices you had to make about the direction and emphasis of the research process.

... Most sources would argue that... women are... the... lesser sex... an idea reinforced through characters... such as... Panderia... and... the... Seven.

* Accounts of... Spartan women and... Hetarai display... women... who were less... "traditional"... they... were... equal... to... men... in... many... respects... aspects of... life/work.

* Direction of research changed... after... this... uncovering... these... sources... to being... more... about... the... independence... of... women.

* Emphasis was placed... more... on... the... independence... Spartan women... in... power... Hetarai... challenging... traditional... views... of... women.

* Changed... because... of... the... biases... authors... of works about women were known... to... be... sexist... men... so... their... accounts... couldn’t... be... true... about... all... aspects... of... life... for... Athenian... women.
Part B

Question 1

Cleopatra

Hers was a life shrouded in controversy, but despite the substantial bias that is reflected in many Roman sources, Cleopatra was, in fact, an effective ruler of Egypt. Cleopatra is not famous for her architecture or religious works or trading schemes like some of her predecessors, but instead for the war she fought to keep her people outside of the control of the Roman empire. She faced many hardships during her rule, yet her loyalty to her people and her country never faltered, making her an effective Queen of Egypt.

Cleopatra was born in 69 BCE. Her family were not of Egyptian origin, but Greek-Hellenistic in nature. Ptolemy XII died, leaving an 18-year-old Cleopatra and her 12-year-old brother Ptolemy XIII as joint monarchs of Egypt. The pair were married as was custom, however Cleopatra made it clear that she had no intentions of sharing the rule with her brother. To prevent her from threatening his power, Ptolemy forced her to flee. With their other sister, from about 48 BCE there is no record of Cleopatra having lived.
Egypt was going through hard times, as the years when Cleopatra and Ptolemy had shared the throne had been rift with droughts, famine, and diseases. When the Roman general, Pompey, arrived on Egyptian soil, Ptolemy had the wrong idea. He killed a thinking man who would win him favor with G Julius Caesar. It had the exact opposite effect and Cleopatra used this opportunity to once again take power. These early years revealed immense determination for Cleopatra, which was one of the reasons she made such an effective ruler.

Cleopatra appealed to Caesar and won him over. He had her reinstated as Queen and let her keep Egypt under the rule of the Pharaohs as long as she pleased. Her loyalty to Rome, the two became lovers and had a child together. After Caesar was killed in Rome, Mark Antony sailed to Egypt to question Cleopatra's loyalty to the Roman state. Like Caesar before him, Antony was won over by her charm. He let her retain her rule over the east while he ruled the West and Egypt continued to prosper under its Queen, Antony, and Cleopatra became lovers again and had two children together. Back in Rome, the people
and thus led her to be represented in a very negative light by most authors and historians. She was seen as a ‘wily temptress’ and seductress. Her unhappy that Egypt had claimed Antony’s love. Cleopatra maintained her relationship with him in order to save her people from Roman rule.

In Rome, the right her power in the aftermath of Caesar’s death continued and Caesar’s heir, Octavian, left Rome for Egypt in order to seize it and hold control of it for himself. What occurred was the infamous battle of Actium. In 31 BCE, Octavian’s fleet faced off against the joint forces of Cleopatra and Antony in the port of Actium. During the fight, Cleopatra withdrew, for reasons still unknown today, and with all her ships and left Antony in the battle. When Antony saw her depart, he ordered his ship to follow. Soon, however, his men leader led and vulnerable, they succumbed quickly to Octavian’s forces and were either surrendered or were killed. The fact that Cleopatra took all her soldiers with her instead of leaving them to die displays respect and loyalty to her people, who she was fighting for. This deep love her Egypt made her an effective ruler because what she did was not done out of fear for herself, but her country.

The result of the battle of Actium was
Disastrous for Egypt, and Cleopatra soon realized that she was no longer going to be able to rule over Egypt. She tried seduction a third time, but it did not work on Octavian. Rather than face the shame of being dragged through the streets of Rome in chains, and have been to represent her people. In such a way, she committed suicide by biting off her tongue. Upon hearing this, Antony committed suicide also in the typical Roman fashion—sparing the breastplate.

Despite the way Cleopatra has been perceived throughout history, and her sometimes selfish, seeming motives, she was an effective ruler of Egypt. She had a deep love for her country. She ruled and despite her family’s Hellenistic background, she saw it as her home. With her died the rule of the Pharaohs, but not without a brave, hard, fight against terrible odds.
Question 3

"The dictatorship of Sulla was intended to ensure the survival of the Roman Republic. To what extent can it be argued that he, in fact, hastened its demise?"

Sulla became the sole dictator of the Roman state in order to ensure the survival of the Republic, however, his actions did the opposite. Instead of saving it, he hastened its demise. Sulla was an arrogant and ambitious man, and this nature impacted the State in numerous ways. He encouraged fuel, play in Rome, and as a result, took power from the councils. He took power from the people by election. Sulla would consult himself and forced the people to ignore all voting procedures to ensure his own position. Finally, he declared himself dictator for an indefinite amount of time, with sole rule of the empire. His actions did not ensure the continuation of a republic, but instead paved the way for his successors to become full dictators of a monarchical Rome.

In order to gain ultimate power, Sulla "devoted himself entirely to the work of butchery." (Source R). He encouraged the
* These included over 500 men, many of whom did not oppose the state in any way.

People of Rome, to turn on their leaders, and leave Rome in ruins, until it was suggested that Sulla publish Descripts. These included all the names of those he could remember (Source R). By doing so, he removed all those with the power to stand and oppose him. Through violence, he demonstrated what was needed to be done in order to remain unchallenged for power.

Another action Sulla took was to take the power out of the hands of the people—the deriving force of the republic.

"To keep up the pretence of constitutional government, Sulla allowed consulship to be elected…” (Source U). He pretended that the people still had the power to choose, but in fact, he had made it so that he had the final say on every matter. In order to ensure he was granted a dictatorship, Sulla wrote a letter to the Romans, in which it stated that whenever was elected should hold office not for a predetermined period, but until he had restored stability to Rome, Italy, and the whole Empire, which had been severely shaken by wars and factional strife.” (Source U). Sulla revealed at the end of his letter that it should in fact be him.

"These were Sulla’s instructions, and the Romans
unwillingly accepted this claim of an election." (Source 13). They didn’t follow any legal voting election procedure. Neither did they imagine to have any sort of control over the situation — Sulla had taken all power out of their hands. (Source 13).

Source Q states that Sulla gave freedom to “more than ten thousand of the youngest and strongest of the proscribed” making them Roman citizens. This ensured that he would always have ten thousand duty-bound, able-bodied “Cornelli” (commons) always ready to serve him. (Source Q). By doing this, he ensured his popularity, and also took the power away from the ex-slaves to oppose him in any way. With his army under his command instead of the state, and with a sizeable force of loyal followers behind him, Sulla took the influence of the Roman citizens out of any command election. Once again, he demonstrated his successors to achieve a full unchallenged dictatorship.

"He proclaimed himself Dictator... A decree was passed giving him immunity for all his past acts, while for the future he was to have the power of life and death, the power.
to confiscate property, to found colonies, to found new cities, or to demolish existing ones, to take away, or to bestow kingdoms at his pleasure.” (Source: 12). In his “fall... of the... Roman Republic,” Plutarch condemns Sulla’s behaviour, and expresses the tyranny behind his actions. He was given ultimate power over Rome for an unlimited amount of time. Similar circumstances had occurred in the past, but Sulla single-handedly revived a type of power not seen for 120 years. (Source: 12). He bestowed gifts upon those loyal to him, and killed those who were not, and kept in power those who were like-minded to himself. (Source: 11), thus he encouraged the concept of another monarchy. Instead of striving for a peaceful Republic, Sulla bullied his way into a dictatorship, and used his actions to set in motion a series of events that would lead to the eventual downfall of the Republic.

Sulla was elected... dictator, in order to revive the... struggling Republic of Rome, but instead, he created the empire on the fast track to monarchy, ruled by a sole dictator. He did little to save the Republic, but much to sow... power... hunger, ambitious men... to claim ultimate... rule of Rome.