ASSESSMENT REPORT 2020

ANH315117 – ANCIENT HISTORY

Introduction

In a challenging year, teachers did a fine job of delivering the course and preparing the candidates for the examination. This year, 207 candidates were enrolled in Ancient History. A significant number of candidates did not sit the exam but still qualified for the Preliminary Achievement award, gaining participation points toward achieving the TCE. In 2020 a smaller number of civilisations was studied around Tasmania for Sections A and B of the course. Greece remained the most popular choice, followed closely by Rome and a smaller number of candidates studied Egypt. In keeping with previous years, approximately a third of the candidates selected a second civilisation to study in Section C. For the first time, candidates studied the Destruction of Troy and Masada in Section A.

In 2020, several significant changes were made to Section B of the exam, in addition to a reduction in the course work requirements. Two short answers replaced the essay in this section and candidates could choose to write on the same core structural element and key feature in both questions. The number of assessable criteria was reduced from three to just one: Criterion 6. This removed the requirement for candidates to provide sources of evidence to support their analysis. In addition, candidates' skills in communication were not assessed directly, although the majority of them still employed paragraphs and complete sentences, rather than dot points. Overall, this section was completed to a satisfactory standard by most candidates.

The exam questions were quite open and straight forward, which invited detailed analytical responses. Students needed to clearly engage with either the stimulus statement or the terminology of the question. The question for Section A included a statement about the relationship between the nature of evidence and interpretations of the past, which summed up the core concepts of this section of the course. It should have enabled candidates to display their deep understanding of these concepts.

The two questions in Section B directly tested knowledge of the relationships between structures, features and context. The two questions explicitly assessed two of three areas of focus that were highlighted in the exam specifications. This gave students the opportunity to prepare their knowledge and understanding accordingly.

In Section C, the question contained a number of elements to be addressed and reminded candidates to analyse, not simply report upon, an individual's power and authority in an ancient society. The questions in Sections A and C reminded candidates to refer to both primary and secondary sources of information, but a significant number of candidates still failed to do so in their responses. Teachers should refer to the 2020 Marking Guide for more detail about what is expected for success in each criterion and rating.

It was disappointing to see the prevalence of prepared responses in 2020. This preparation was obvious when an essay's introduction included little, or no, reference to terms and concepts from the question. Instead, these responses launched into general and unfocused discussion around the topic, leaving the marker searching for relevance. It is recommended that teachers provide a range of revision questions that require candidates to adapt their knowledge and compose the analytical arguments required for more than a "C" rating on the content criteria. The best responses used the phrasing and/or key terms of the question in their responses, particularly in the introduction and topic sentences of each paragraph which candidates should practice during the course.

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Criterion 3 | General Comments

Candidates are required to show proficiency in communicating historical analysis in a coherent and focused way. In Sections A and C, this took the form of a formal essay to present salient points through a logical structure. Clear communication enables a marker to appreciate the quality of the points and evidence. The more successful responses were divided into logically sequenced paragraphs that advanced an argument, beginning with a topic sentence that referenced a term or concept from the question. In weaker responses, the body of the essay consisted of just one or two long paragraphs which contained a jumbled array of points. Candidates are reminded that succinct paragraphs actually help them to shape their own answer clearly as they write, by breaking the answer into clear sections and keeping focus in the discussion. They are encouraged to spend some time planning their response before they launch into writing.

Since the exam responses are formal pieces of communication, candidates are reminded of the convention of using third person point of view at all times. Some candidates lapsed into using "I", which reduced the impact of their analysis. Maintaining the use of past tense is usually recommended, and this reduces the tendency for candidates to fall into a narrative mode, as in the following: "While the Persian navy enters the Straits of Salamis, Themistocles puts the rest of his plan into operation."

The use of imprecise and informal language was also characteristic of less satisfactory responses. Use of words such as "kids" and "stuff," or phrases such as "The leader had a go at reforming," or "gave it his best shot," weakens the whole tone of the essay. The word, 'heavily,' was frequently misused when describing an event or individual when more formal choices such as "significantly," or "greatly" are more effective. The better responses featured the use of precise and nuanced language, often correctly incorporating terms and phrases from the selected civilisation. It is important that such terms are spelled correctly, or their effect is diminished and the communication standard is lowered.

Candidates are encouraged to study the style and structure of some of the best modern texts in use in their study. They can learn much from discussing which modern scholars employ the most coherent and effective style and using them as models. Some direct instruction in sentence construction and the use of paragraphing and punctuation is useful in laying the foundation of effective communication.

Criterion 4 | General Comments

Discussing and evaluating the nature of available evidence is central to historical analysis. When assessing this criterion, markers evaluated the quality of the points made in each response, as well as the use of historical sources. The better responses argued a clear position that drew upon highly accurate historical details including dates, events and developments. Overall, candidates displayed solid knowledge of ancient and modern texts and archaeological sources. However, there was still a significant number of candidates who did not directly refer to any source material, despite the questions in Sections A and C explicitly reminding them to address this element. It was disappointing to read some very solid, lengthy responses that were not successful because of the omission of sources, which meant that they were unable to have a rich discussion about interpretations and arguments.

The best responses used critically selected sources, evaluated their relevance and synthesised them into their argument, demonstrating a grasp of the perspective or opinion of the author. While well-chosen short quotes were effectively used in better responses to underpin an argument, or to make a new point, succinct paraphrasing of an author's ideas is just as effective. In weaker responses, there was a tendency to include all quotes that had been learned in class, even if they were not really relevant to the question. This should be avoided, as it sometimes confuses the point the candidate is trying to make. While there are many quotes that are well known and commonly used, better responses made use of pertinent, but less well-known examples.

Provision of the author and date of the text in brackets is required for references to modern texts. For ancient sources the inclusion of the author's name and title of the literary text is expected. Detailed reference to a specific section or chapter of a text is not required. Weaker responses simply name-dropped sources and didn't use them critically. Candidates are encouraged to use primary sources as evidence for the different aspects of the ancient world and secondary sources as ways of interpreting that evidence. A good balance is important.

This criterion requires a range of evidence to be included, but candidates are advised that "peppering" a response with a large number of sources will result in a disjointed and shallow argument on the question. Candidates are advised to include reference to 4-5 significant sources to support their argument. Use of at least one primary and/or secondary source is required for a "C" rating.

SECTION A – CRITERIA 3, 4 AND 5

- EGYPT -

Question 1

Criterion 4

While most candidates included a satisfactory range of points in response to the question, several failed to include any sources of evidence about the battle. Stronger responses discussed the nature and purpose of Egyptian inscriptions when considering their reliability about the events and outcome of the battle. Ramesses II's own *Poem* and *Bulletin,* as well as images on temple walls, were thoughtfully discussed. Their claims of victory were contrasted with the need for the Peace Treaty with the Hittite king, which was composed 16 years after the battle. The strongest responses included commentary on how modern interpretations of the significance and victors of the battle have changed since early in the twentieth century, when it was accepted that the Egyptians had a massive victory.

Criterion 5

Overall, most candidates addressed this question in a satisfactory manner, with a small number presenting highly effective, detailed responses. The question suited the Battle of Kadesh very well. Twentieth century translations of Hittite sources have prompted a contested interpretation of the outcome of the battle. This has cast more doubt on the reliability of the Egyptian sources, so there was plenty to write about in response to the statement in the question.

In weaker responses, candidates wrote a narrative of the main events leading up to (and including) the battle, with little heed being paid to the different elements of the question. They failed to show understanding of the key concepts of Section A: ways of investigating the ancient world.

Questions 2 and 3

Criterion 6

Candidates had to attempt to answer both questions in order to gain a "C" rating and most did this quite well. Few candidates wrote at length on one question and then much less on the other. Candidates who were less successful wrote very little on either question despite the questions being very open. While candidates were not required to discuss different Core Elements or Features many chose to do so, showing depth and breadth of knowledge and less repetition in their responses.

In general, these questions were completed satisfactorily. The more successful responses analysed and evaluated the relationship between a Core Element and a Key Feature rather than merely describing details.

Question 4

Criterion 7

Egyptian leaders were a very popular choice, particularly Hatshepsut and Akhenaten. Most candidates effectively described the close connections between the social / historical context and the leader's authority and impact.

- GREECE -

Question 1 - Delphi

Candidates had the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge regarding connections between our current understanding of the purpose and history of Delphi over time, and the plethora of available evidence. The question suited Delphi because contestability of the evidence was only one element in the question, and much of our understanding of Delphi is agreed upon rather than being contested. Candidates could choose to instead focus on the reliability and validity of the different types of evidence: literary, epigraphic and archaeological. Teachers are encouraged to continue exploring key historical events that occurred involving Delphi but only through the lens of the nature, scope and limitations of the evidence rather than as a narrative of events.

The question incorporated a large number of terms and concepts that are central to the study of Section A, and these all had to be addressed. While most responses explored the 'reliability, contestability or validity' of interpretations, many failed to explicitly discuss the 'type, origin, purpose or context' of the evidence. The best responses engaged in historiography with multiple sources, including primary and secondary sources, to elucidate a clearer picture of the ancient past. The best responses also evaluated the strength of particular arguments, and at the top end, proposed their own supported arguments.

Criterion 4

Better responses discussed when texts were written, the purpose of writing, and any other reason they may be questioned for their reliability and validity. For example, Plutarch is a good source on Delphi because he was a priest at the site, but this also makes his account biased. As a religious official, his lens was that of the religious. Therefore, belief may have clouded his descriptions, or he may have had to omit details because of his position. The best responses referred to a range of sources – ancient, modern, archaeological – and assessed their value in interpreting the site or event. Only the strongest responses questioned the validity of the sources, including omissions, purpose and reliability and the date of the evidence.

Criterion 5

Weaker responses did not refer to the statement or use it as a framework for the response, but instead gave an indication of having prepared a stock essay. Candidates were not able to deliver a competent, nuanced argument if they did not directly address the concepts in the question. Weaker responses provided a description of Delphi and its roles without any clear and explicit reference to the nature, type, origin or context of the evidence on which this information was based.

The characteristics of better responses included direct and explicit reference to concepts and terms from the question supported by thorough analysis of the nature, type, purpose and context of the evidence. Better responses were able to link specific literary evidence, such as Herodotus and Plutarch's accounts, and the archaeological evidence shown by such features as the Temple of Apollo, Theatre of Delphi, Athenian Treasury, the Charioteer sculpture and the

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Serpentine Column. These responses linked this evidence to our understanding of the political, economic and social role that Delphi played in the lives of Ancient Greeks and how this may have changed over time.

With such an extensive history at this site to consider, candidates are encouraged to be selective in the topics to be discussed, such as the main purpose and functions of Delphi. This includes the practice of religion, trade and politics. However, candidates need to be wary of confining their discussion to just one or two narrow topics, such as debate about the existence of the 'dragon's breath' chasm, or the ritual surrounding the receiving and interpretation of Apollo's message. Such narrow discussion is unlikely to produce the rich arguments and breadth of knowledge required for a high rating.

Question 1- The Destruction of Troy

For the first time, candidates submitted responses on the Destruction of Troy (c1180 BCE). The majority did well at showing their understanding of the ways in which scholars have investigated and interpreted the history of this ancient site. Candidates had the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of connections between our developing and contested understanding of the rise and fall of societies at Troy over time, and the plethora of available evidence. The question suited Troy because the contestability of the evidence of the destruction of different periods of the city is central to our understanding. Teachers are encouraged to continue exploring key historical events that occurred at the site and around the region, but mainly through the lens of the nature, scope and limitations of the evidence rather than as a narrative of agreed events. While an understanding of the agreed history of the site from its earliest settlement to the Roman era is part of the course, the exam response should mainly focus on investigating the Destruction of Troy in the late Bronze Age period. Weaker responses attempted to analyse the destruction of multiple strata of the city in detail, or mainly focused on the reliability of *The Iliad* as an historical source or recounted the events and outcome of the Trojan War as described by Homer.

The question incorporated a large number of terms and concepts that are central to the study of Section A, and these all had to be addressed. While most responses explored the 'reliability, contestability or validity' of interpretations many failed to explicitly discuss the 'type, origin, purpose or context' of the evidence. The best responses engaged in historiography with multiple sources, including primary and secondary sources, to elucidate a clearer picture of the ancient past. The best responses also evaluated the strength of particular arguments including those historians, such as Eric H. Cline (2013), who argue that late Bronze Age Troy's demise was more likely due to a number of contributing factors than a single one such as warfare, fire or natural disasters. Weaker responses offered general discussion of the main interpretations and sources, but did not explicitly use the terms from the question or consider the concepts.

Criterion 4

The best responses did analyse and evaluate a range of competing theories about the demise of late Bronze Age Troy, and synthesised their evidence in a compelling manner. They examined the changing nature of the evidence about the site as more scientific methods became available in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They also briefly analysed the destructive effect of Schliemann's search for Homer's Troy near the bottom strata of the ancient tell and the validity of his claims to have found "Priam's treasure." Contrasting his biased and uninformed methods with later objective, scientifically-based archaeological methods, enabled able candidates to consider the concepts in the first part of the question in pleasing depth.

Effective responses drew upon the work of scholars prescribed in the course (Dörpfeld, Blegen and Korfmann) and analysed the interpretations of some modern historians. These responses offered lively, vigorous debate about the merit of each interpretation and their most significant base evidence. Less effective responses reported interpretations as being fact (there was a major war between the Myceneans and the Trojans c1180 BCE; strata VI was definitely

destroyed by earthquake and fire) or criticised Homer for not being a reliable historical source, overlooking the form and purpose of his epic poems.

In the majority of responses, there was a focus on the sources of evidence candidates had studied, rather than simply describing the location of the site and its architecture.

Criterion 5

Some candidates spent too much time outlining the context around the enduring interest in the site of Troy and its significance to the ancient Greeks as well as the modern world. Consequently, there was little time left for analysing differing interpretations. The focus of the response must mainly be on contested interpretations of the destruction of Troy later in its Bronze Age history and the nature of the evidence that supports them. There were many effective responses to this question and a number of outstanding pieces of historical analysis.

There were some thoughtful responses that briefly debated whether the site of Troy has actually been proven, especially considering the lack of ancient literary sources found at the site or in Anatolia. The weaker responses mainly outlined the life and career of Schliemann or Troy as a whole over time, or debated the merits of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* as historical sources. While these are all useful topics, successful responses included a wide range of interpretations and sources of evidence in order to address all of the components of the question.

Questions 2 and 3

Criterion 6

Candidates had to attempt to answer both questions in order to gain a "C" rating and most did this quite well. Few candidates wrote at length on one question and then much less on the other. Candidates who were less successful wrote very little on either question despite the questions being very open. While candidates were not required to discuss different Core Elements or Features, many chose to do so, showing depth and breadth of knowledge and less repetition in their responses.

Candidates needed to specify in the opening sentence which polis was going to be discussed: Athens or Sparta. Some weak responses provided very general comments about ancient Greek societies and cultural practices without providing the depth and detail of discussion about a single polis that was required for success. Some stronger candidates were able to effectively contrast practices in Athens and Sparta, and analyse the reasons for these differences, but when less able candidates attempted to include points about the two poleis their responses were ineffectual.

A basic error was not addressing the specific components of both questions and instead, writing prepared responses. Stronger responses used the phrasing of the questions and had an introductory statement and one that concluded the discussion, even if they didn't separate the argument into conventional paragraphs. Too few candidates used the wording of Question 2 and many did not discuss both the geographical and historical contexts. Another common error was discussion of a Key Feature's impact upon the Core Element rather than the other way around.

Weaker responses discussed the role of women through a modern, feminist lens, which was not particularly useful when exploring the perspectives of an ancient society which led to its particular attitudes and practices. Less able responses focused too much on individuals rather than structures and practices when referring to politics or culture. The weakest responses simply consisted of information about the structures, practices and key features and did not analyse their connections nor impact.

Stronger answers provided specific examples of the feature, such as architecture or warfare, by describing a specific example and showing how that was demonstrative of change or continuity. Better responses were able to link political organisations (that also had economic and social practices), such as the Peloponnesian League, Hellenic League and the Delian League to the key feature of weapons and warfare through key conflicts such as the Persian Wars and Peloponnesian Wars. Better responses were also able to link economic needs or requirements and social expectations

and values to increasing the likelihood of conflict and war. This was best explored through the *agoge* in Sparta or the *ephebes* in Athens.

Better responses were able to describe key political positions (depending on the polis and the time period) or political practices and their impact on war. Citizenship in Athens and Sparta was not granted without military training, the Spartan Kings and Ephors had key roles during warfare, the Athenian strategoi and polemarch had explicit military responsibilities, ostracism was a political practice designed to prevent civil war or stasis.

The strongest answers drew on explicit historical events and developments. Examples of economic and social structures impacting weapons and warfare included the subjugation of the *helots* - arguably leading to the introduction of the *agoge* by Lycurgus. The phalanx was a weapon of the aristocracy whereas the triremes needed *thetes* to row. Women's roles and status in society were impacted by laws, economic circumstances (metic/hetaira) and the emphasis and importance of religion in Athens and Sparta. Better responses linked social and cultural practices such as religious festivals to the role of women. They showed the political, economic and social importance of the *oikos* in ancient Greece and how this impacted women as those left to administrate the *oikos*. Art and Architecture were impacted by political, economic and social values, developments and events. Better answers on Athens were able to detail the building programs of Peisistratus and Pericles.

Question 4

The question invited some rich discussion on the context, motivation and the impact of a significant individual. It suited discussion of Greek personalities, and candidates who chose to write on Thucydides generally did well this year compared to previous years. It is valid for candidates to argue that an individual's motivation for action is unknown, or to draw upon primary sources to suggest the likely motivation. The question contained multiple elements that challenged weaker candidates as they frequently produced prepared, generalised essays or omitted an entire element from the question in their response. Many responses in this section utilised the same stock-standard sources and quotes, suggesting the over teaching of these things, and memorisation of essays. Candidates need to be prepared in their revision to respond to a range of question types and wording.

Criterion 4

Stronger responses provided a variety of interpretations of the individual's influence and impact, including contemporary and modern secondary sources, where available. The best responses used secondary sources to back up an argument, and primary sources to give evidence for it. Candidates who write on Thucydides are reminded that they should only use historians as secondary sources rather than modern political figures.

Criterion 7

Unfortunately, too many responses were still narrative rather than analytical in approach and style. While it is always tempting for weaker candidates to just recount the main events, some practice in using topic sentences that address an element from the question will help them to argue rather than describe. Stronger candidates evaluated the impact of the social and historical context on an individual's career and the influence of their own personality and ambition. These candidates supplied detailed, relevant information about several key events as part of their analysis. When evaluating the impact on the society the most successful responses considered at least two of the following categories: political, economic, social, cultural and/or short-, medium- or long-term effects.

Many responses did not attempt to discuss possible motivations. In particular, those responding to Themistocles often simply detailed his life and actions. Discussion of Peisistratus and Solon was generally well done, perhaps because there is less to write about so candidates could employ a tight structure in their response and focus on several key events? Some candidates effectively argued that Cleomenes was more of an exemplar of his society than one who had enduring influence.

- ROME -

Question 1 - The Roman Games

Criterion 4

In some cases, candidates managed to discuss the origin, context and nature of the material, but then didn't really carry through to examining how this may affect its contestability or validity as evidence. In the case of the Roman Games there is a wide range of evidence – graffiti, eyewitness literary accounts, works of art, archaeological sites – which allows for a good discussion of context, but not much disagreement amongst modern historians about the meaning of this evidence. This may also be a reason for the failure of many to address the second half of the question.

Criterion 5

The main problem with this question was that many students simply didn't answer it. Some candidates wrote very detailed prepared responses which included excellent historical detail but failed to address the validity, contestability and nature of the sources. Candidates needed to analyse the sources, not merely use them to present the historical content. The best responses could clearly demonstrate how the context of a source influenced the perspective. Weaker responses merely cited the sources without demonstrating a grasp of their context or contestability.

The question clearly directed candidates to the aspects of source material they should be investigating. However, many candidates, spent much, or all, of their time discussing what the evidence suggested about the role of the Games and how it could be interpreted, but *not* about how valid that interpretation was, when this was explicitly what the question asked for.

In many cases, candidates rightly referred to the question in their introduction, and used some of the terms from it, but then failed to address any of that in their essay. In some cases, the terms were just scattered through the essay which simply emphasised the fact that these repeatedly identified aspects of the question had *not* actually been discussed.

Question 1- Masada

Overall, responses that discussed Masada questions were strong. Masada clearly lent itself very well to this question, which may account for why it was more successfully addressed. Candidates were clearly very well prepared in terms of knowing why Josephus may be considered an unreliable source, and why many modern historians have their own agenda in how they wish Masada to be interpreted.

Question 2 and 3

Criterion 6

Candidates had to attempt to answer both questions in order to gain a "C" rating and most did this quite well. Few candidates wrote at length on one question and then much less on the other. Candidates who were less successful wrote very little on either question despite the questions being very open. While candidates were not required to discuss different Core Elements or Features many chose to do so, showing depth and breadth of knowledge and less repetition in their responses.

This section produced a wide range of answers. Question 2 was generally more successfully addressed than Question 3. This is not surprising, as it was a good general question that gave students scope to specialise in an area they knew well. There is still a lot to cover here, however, and students sometimes found it difficult to keep both the Feature and the Structure in focus at the same time. Often, they simply discussed the Structure first, then the Feature, without showing how the first had an impact on the second. Occasionally, they reversed the nature of the question and talked about how the Feature had an impact on the Structure. Stronger answers selected material about the Structure which clearly

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did have an impact on the Feature, discussed this thoroughly, then made the explicit links to how this had affected the Feature.

Question 3 was more specific and therefore not as well done generally, as some candidates failed to address all the elements. It is not an easy task to address a Structure and a Feature and both its geographical and historical contexts at the best of times, but very difficult in just half an hour. The success of answers here often relied on the Structure and Feature selected. Some of them simply didn't provide much scope for discussion of the specific context, particularly geographical. Candidates should think carefully about what content will suit the question, rather than just going with the area they know best.

A significant problem was some candidates simply repeating the same material they had used in the first question when addressing the second question. This was perfectly allowable, providing it was now tailored to the specific point about geographical or historical context. Stronger answers managed to do this, but weaker ones struggled to find enough relevant geographical or historical influences. In some cases, the whole essay was written out again virtually word for word, with the addition of one line about geographical and historical context in the introduction (which was then roundly ignored for the rest of the answer).

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