

2018 VCE History: Ancient History examination report

General comments

The 2018 Ancient History examination was divided into three sections on three civilisations, with two parts for each civilisation. Students were required to select two civilisations and answer both parts for each one.

Although the standard of student responses was satisfactory, some students disregarded the wording of the questions or did not respond adequately to the key descriptors. It is important that students understand and practise the different skills required to complete the different tasks, namely using historical sources, essay writing, writing extended responses and shorter responses, and addressing the command terms. In Part 1, students should learn to distinguish between what each question is asking. Sometimes too much effort was put into responding to Questions 1a. and 1b. at the expense of Question 1c. Students with high-scoring responses understood the requirements of Question 1c., incorporated specific primary sources and used the arguments of historians to support their response. However, this was the least well answered of the Part 1 questions across all three civilisations. Question 1c. provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate depth of knowledge.

Often students avoided using dates or were inaccurate with the dates they used. For example, a common error was to confuse the First Peloponnesian War (460–445) with the first phase of what is generally called the Second Peloponnesian War. Perhaps as part of their preparation for the examination students could sequence significant events on timelines to strengthen their knowledge.

Essay responses often needed more specific details, and there were a number that seemed to be prepared responses rather than responses to the question asked. The use of evidence from relevant, attributed sources (not textbook authors) are expected in the essay; the highest scoring responses to Question 1c. also included quotations that were appropriately selected to support students' arguments. They may be valuable in responses to Question 1b. (but can be safely omitted); they were not needed in responses to Question 1a.

A small number of students wrote responses to all three civilisations. Students should be reminded of the examination requirements. Students should also be reminded to label their responses clearly when they add information in the extra space for responses at the back of the question and answer book.

Part 1 – Living in an ancient society comprised three questions requiring responses to an extract from one or more sources. Question 1a. for each of the three societies invited students to respond to the extract, without a need to provide a great deal of additional detail for their response. High-scoring responses focused on showing comprehension of the source(s) provided, identified the relevant points that were requested and succinctly quoted from the source to show that they understood the meaning of the source. In contrast, low-scoring responses were either too general or were simply transposed slabs of text from the source, with little demonstration that the student

understood the point being made by the source. Question 1b. asked students to 'explain', which required them to include an element of causal relationship between events and outcomes. Students with high-scoring responses used the source(s) provided and included relevant historical knowledge specific to the historical period to supplement evidence from the source. Question 1c. required students to demonstrate an understanding of an historical period within the Area of Study. It was the least successfully handled question, with many students struggling to produce more complete responses. The questions covered a wide historical period and required a wider range of knowledge. They asked students to create a response using their own knowledge base and show evidence of other sources. Equally importantly, the task words 'Evaluate the extent to which...' required the students to make a judgment about the significance of changes in relation to a historical context of the question. Furthermore, students should aim to discuss what changes occurred over time, as well as what factors stayed the same. Students should be aware of the time frames of each Area of Study. The highest scoring responses presented a concise and balanced evaluation that focused clearly on the question. Assertions of historical fact were supported by specific historical knowledge while interpretations of the historical significance of the facts were supported by reference to historians or historical figures. Average responses tended to be too general, lacking in specific dates and historical knowledge. Low-scoring responses usually restated the question or generally repeated points made in responses to Questions 1a. and 1b.

Part 2 – 'People in power, societies in crisis' offered students a choice of two essay questions, with each essay topic covering an aspect of the study. Addressing the wording of the questions is paramount, and students need to adhere to the questions. Students cannot come with prepared responses in the hope that they will successfully guess the focus of the question. The 'discuss' prompt cannot be reconstructed into 'to what extent'.

A number of essays were not well structured. Basics such as a clear contention or argument, topic sentences or paragraphing, were often lacking. Essays should have had a brief introduction with a contention that outlined the key ideas of the argument, body paragraphs and a short conclusion. Students do not lose marks for a lack of essay structure.

More focus is needed on the skill of constructing a historical argument, rather than simply recounting a narrative. The essay is a test of the ability of students to think, demonstrated by their ability to construct a relevant argument, using appropriate supporting evidence. Knowledge is important but the essay is not a task about measuring how much information is known about a civilisation. Topic sentences that contribute to building a sustained argument and selective use of historical examples and quotes that contribute to an argument are required.

Specific information

Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

Section A – Egypt

Part 1 – Living in an ancient society

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	3	2	23	37	35	3

The king's actions included becoming enraged, prepared for battle, charged the enemy, killed many and hurled them into the Orontes.

While students with low-scoring responses relied on general statements or unnecessary contextual details, students with high-scoring responses clearly outlined the actions of Ramesses II as a successful warrior-pharaoh and used pertinent quotations to support their response.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	2	2	11	18	28	26	11	3.9

Students with high-scoring responses focused on the triumphalist nature of the pharaoh as a great leader and successful warrior-king. They were able to identify the key features of the source that supported their response to the question, noting such things as the scale and composition of the pharaoh towering over the enemy to emphasise the pharaoh's power and importance, the chaos of the battle and the pharaoh wearing the *Khepresh* (war) crown. Also, they incorporated examples of other New Kingdom pharaohs, particularly Thutmose III.

Question 1c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	14	4	9	6	7	15	14	13	10	5	2	4.7

Students with high-scoring responses recognised the Battle of Kadesh as a significant turning point in the history of New Kingdom Egypt. These responses noted the eventual success of the treaty, namely the neutralisation of the Hittite threat, and the marriage diplomacy between the royal houses. However, they also recognised that the indecisive outcome of the battle opened the way for new threats from the Assyrians and the semi-nomadic Libyan desert tribes. The accession of Ramesses III was paralleled by the advent of the Sea Peoples who afflicted his reign by hampering trade and the economy, leading to strikes and even the attempted assassination of the pharaoh. Lower scoring responses tended to narrate the battle without any consideration of the consequences.

Part 2 – People in power, societies in crisis

Question chosen	none	2	3
%	7	42	51

Essay

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	8	2	4	1	4	4	4	5	13	5	4	4	5	5	7	9	5	4	5	1	1	10.1

Question 2

Question 2 was the more popular of the two essays. Students with high-scoring responses considered the representative ‘tensions’ beyond just the moving of the capital city to Akhetaten. They recognised both the continuing tradition of supporting the Amun-Re priesthood, with no break with traditional artistic and architectural conventions even during the first years of Akhenaten’s reign, and Amenotep III’s role in seeking to curb the power of the Amun-Re priesthood, with the erection of temples to Aten alongside that of Amon such as at Karnak, thereby acknowledging Aten as an emerging cult. It was the building of Akhetaten that made the most powerful statements of change that severed ties with the past. The building program therefore needed some discussion, such as the use of talatat blocks, the building of smaller, open-air temples, as well as the new uninhibited focus on and worship of the royal couple as ‘gods’ in the form of statues.

Question 3

Question 3 asked students to evaluate Nefertiti’s role in the political and religious developments of the Eighteenth Dynasty alongside and then following the death of Akhenaten, perhaps under the name of Nefer-neferu-aten. Students with high-scoring responses were able to substantiate their discussions with analyses of a range of examples, such as the use of regal titles; depictions of her being of equal stature with Akhenaten; depictions of her wearing regalia such as her distinctive blue war crown, or as the warrior-pharaoh sphinx; or her role in religious ceremonies and rituals.

The following is an example of a high scoring response to Question 3.

Queen Nefertiti achieved a significant degree of social and political prominence during the reign of her husband Akhenaten (1352-1336 B.C.) in the Amarna Period. Nefertiti was depicted as Akhenaten’s political equal in a succession of images and reliefs from the Amarna Period, emphasising her involvement in the running of the Egyptian empire. She also attained a high level of prestige in the religious beliefs promoted by her husband and her reign therefore marks a change in the role of Egyptian queens. The undeniable presence of Nefertiti in all aspects of Egyptian life during her time has led to speculations and debate surrounding a possible co-regency with Akhenaten.

The significant role that Nefertiti played in Egyptian politics throughout the Amarna period (1352-1336 B.C.) is made evident by her portrayal in art from the period. While depictions from the early reign of Akhenaten and Nefertiti portray her in a traditional style, standing demurely behind her husband, following the birth of her first daughter Meritaten, she is consistently depicted as a political equal to Akhenaten. Scenes from the Temple of Karnak show Nefertiti as a pharaoh alone, worshipping the Aten. She is depicted twice as many times as Akhenaten in the temple and is often associated with pharaonic symbols like no other queen of the 18th dynasty. The repetitive images of Nefertiti at Karnak suggest that her political role was almost as significant as Akhenaten’s. In contrast to other queens of the 18th dynasty, except for Hatshepsut as king, Nefertiti was also depicted as a traditional warrior. In an inscription on a block at Heliopolis, Nefertiti appears smiting an enemy of Egypt, a position usually only adopted by a pharaoh. Historian Pamela Bradley asserts that ‘Akhenaten treated Nefertiti as his true partner, not only in their family life, but in their political life as well,’ emphasising Nefertiti’s undeniable significance in the Amarna Period.

Nefertiti also played an integral role in the religious ideology promoted by Akhenaten. Akhenaten’s religious reforms led to a concentration of religious power and superiority in the royal family. While some historians such as Steindorff and Steele, attribute Akhenaten’s reforms

to 'religious fanaticism' (Steindorff and Steele), A. Thomas explains that Akhenaten was 'less of a monotheist' and more of a 'political opportunist' who was able to 'dogmatically and rationally' (Thomas) assert his superiority by creating a god to whom the only direct link was the royal family. Nefertiti therefore played a significant role in the religious development of the Amarna period as one of the two people through whom the 'rays of Aten' flowed. A depiction of Nefertiti and Akhenaten in the tomb of the vizier Ramose shows the developed form of the Aten handing the ankh, a symbol of life, to the pair. This scene reinforces Nefertiti's importance as the 'beloved' wife of Akhenaten who shares in his links with the Aten.

The political and social roles played by Nefertiti during the reign of her husband has lead to suggestions that the pair shared a co-regency. The appearance of a shadowy figure, Imenkhare, towards the end of Akhenaten's reign has been attributed by several historians, notably Julia Samson, to a co-regency between Akhenaten and Nefertiti. Samson argues that the figure Imenkhare did not exist and was actually Nefertiti as co-regent. This claim is supported by the fact that Nefertiti and Imenkhare shared the name 'Beloved of Akhenaten'. However, Redford contradicts Samson, claiming that 'the fact that Nefertiti and Imenkhare share a name in common was not significant'. A. Dodson supports this view, pointing out that an inscription found in the tomb of Tutankhamun (1336-1327 B.C.) indicates that Imenkhare was married to Meritaten and was therefore presumably male. While there is no conclusive evidence to prove that Nefertiti was co-regent between 1338-1336 B. C., her political prominence and pharaonic association, such as the fact her name was enclosed in cartouches at Karnak, suggest that it may have been possible.

Overall, Nefertiti played an unequivocally significant role in the developments of the Amarna Period, setting her apart from all other queens of the eighteenth dynasty.

Section B – Greece

Part 1 – Living in an ancient society

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	0	1	7	27	65	3.6

Most students were able to identify the reforms listed in Source 1. These were the redistribution of tribes, the increased council numbers linked to the tribes, the trittyes, demes and ostracism.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	6	8	16	22	24	17	8	3.4

High marks were awarded to students who recognised another aspect of political power, such as voting in the assembly or boule, or standing for office, as well as a detailed explanation of ostracism – the process, the purpose of preventing conflict, the political strength it provided Athenians, particularly as a political tool to attack political opponents. However, very few students were able to make historical points that linked the question to events between 500 and 450 BCE. There was opportunity here for students to provide some context to Cleisthenes's reforms (such as how ostracism was used) by discussing political participation in the light of the Persian Wars and political rivalries in Athens at the conclusion of the wars. Some students discussed the Pisistratid tyranny or Solon's reforms, which were both irrelevant to the time period.

Question 1c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	11	5	11	8	12	12	13	11	8	5	3	4.6

A number of students assumed that being asked to evaluate the extent of similarity meant that only similarities were being sought. Students with high-scoring responses disagreed with the statement, and compared and showed evidence from both governments. The range of responses covered the different constitutions, the internal political structures, the difference class structures, and how the different societies shaped their respective government.

Part 2 – People in power, societies in crisis

Question chosen	none	2	3
%	9	26	66

Essay

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	12	6	5	5	5	3	5	6	8	4	5	5	4	5	6	4	3	3	2	1	2	8.1

Question 2

Students with high-scoring responses questioned the statement, considered factors such as the peace treaty terms and the expectations of Athens, Sparta and their respective allies. Only a few students considered Alcibiades's motives and actions leading to Mantinea with the treaty's failure. Students who wanted to look ahead to the Sicilian expedition needed to frame it in the context of the resurgence of Athenian confidence after the plague, seen not only at Sicily, but also at Mytilene and Melos.

Question 3

Many students attempted to turn this question into one discussing 'the extent' to which Pericles contributed to the course of the Second Peloponnesian War, rather than 'his role' in the conflict, that is, 'the role of the individual in the crisis'. Pericles's career between 454 and 431 was open for consideration. His political reforms strengthening radical democracy; his building program as a statement of Athenian power; his role in the expansion of Athenian power that led to 'Sparta's fear'; and his role in the changing diplomatic relations with Sparta, leading to the outbreak of war, were all valid avenues of discussion. Some students rightly argued that his political dominance until 431 and his preferred military strategy, tied his successors to his course of action, thereby continuing his role after his death.

The following is an example of a mid-scoring response to Question 3. The student displayed wide knowledge but wandered from the question.

The Peloponnesian War (430–404) was a dramatic conflict between rising economic and naval power, Athens, and traditional military super power, Sparta, in a fight that would ultimately shape the future of the western world. The conflict had a number of key causations, and chief among these was the role of Athenian leader Pericles, who both inspired and implemented acts of hubristic Athenian imperialism, which ultimately served to justify the war from the Spartan perspective. However, in addition to this, other causes of the war include the growing military and economic rivalry between Athens and Sparta, to which Pericles only contributed slightly,

and the ideological differences between the two states. Overall, though Pericles contributed greatly to the outbreak of war, there were also other factors.

Pericles involvement in the beginning of the Peloponnesian War primarily comes from his imperialistic acts as informal leader of Athens. This begins with his movement of the Delian Treasury (454) to the Acropolis, in the “the greatest act of embezzlement in Greek history” (Vlacos), using the defeat of Athens in the Egyptian campaign (460–455) as a justification to so do, as Pericles formed the Athenian empire. Further, the strict control over the league, where “formerly independent allies were compelled to obey” (Martin) can be seen in the siege of Samos (439), where the rebelling Delian ally was sieged and its entire navy crucified. This event “sent a clear message to all of Greece... beware the power of Athens” (Trittle), though it also demonstrated the brutality of Athenian imperialism and as such threatened the sovereignty of other Greek states, leading to war. Further, Athenian provocation is seen in the Megarian Decree (432), arguably motivated personally by Pericles which “condemned Megara to ruin” (Thucydides), and acted as a catalyst for the war, highlighting Pericles personal culpability. After his death, his imperialistic legacy would live on in the Melian Dialogue (412), where Athens adopted the attitude that “the strong do what they can, the weak suffer as they must” (Thucydides), highlighting the arrogance of Athens, in the diplomatic arena, believing itself, as Pericles stated, to be “the School of Hellas”. Overall, Pericles actions in geopolitics set a precedent for Athenian imperialism, which would turn much of Greece against it and act as a cause of the Peloponnesian War.

However, a further cause of the Peloponnesian War, largely independent of Pericles, was the existing military and economic rivalry between Athens and Sparta, which began with the Persian Wars ... which was “Athens’ coming of age as a great military power” (Worthington). Greek culture was dominated by the concept of the ‘Aresterian Ideal’ which was ‘to the best’, and this notion created competition between the different poli for hegemonic status over Greece. The military rivalry can be seen in the immense build up of Athenian ships, shown in them importing wood from all across the Mediterranean as local supply was insufficient. Further, Thucydides notes that “the growth of Athenian power and the fear this caused in Sparta” was a major cause, with the Athenian navy allowing to spread its influence all across the Greek world, beyond the capabilities of Sparta. The extreme rivalry was further revealed in the treaty of Miletus (419) between Persia and Sparta, in which Sparta “kowtow(ed) to the oriental barbarian” (Cartledge) in order to receive advantage, in the form of a navy in the war, highlighting the intensity of the hatred, as Sparta was willing to undo the progress of the Persian Wars just to assert itself, displaying a further cause of war beyond Pericles. Moreover, the economic rise of Athens greatly motivated conflict, as “the quantity of goods provided in Athens was far greater than could be manufactured in a purely household economy” ... indicating rudimentary industrialisation efforts from Athens, that would see it eclipse the economy of Sparta furthering the dramatic rivalry that acted as a catalyst for war, and highlighting that beyond Pericles geopolitical power struggles were a major factor in the Peloponnesian War.

Furthermore, an additional cause of war beyond Pericles was the vast ideological differences between the powers, as ideological conflict exacerbated tensions between the states. According to... the Greek world was characterised by “vertical stasis” (class struggle) and “horizontal stasis” (faction fighting), and to deal with this civil strife, Sparta adopted the ideology of ‘Eumonia’ or ‘good order’, whilst Athens chose ‘Isonomia’ or ‘equality before the law’, and these differences manifested in Sparta having a “mixed constitution” (Aristotle) whilst Athens held a Democracy. Conflict between Sparta’s mostly oligarchic ideology and Athenian democracy is noted by Bradley, stating “the war was basically a conflict between supporters of oligarchy and democracy”. Ideologically motivated violence was first seen in the Epidamnian civil war (435) in which Athens supported ally Corcyra against the oligarchy supporting Corinth, which “gave Corinth her first cause for war against Athens” (Thucydides), as a vital Spartan ally. Further the Lesbian Revolt (428) and Corcyran civil war (426) saw further politically motivated violence, where there was “violence of every shape and form... people went to every extreme and beyond” (Thucydides) in their pursuit of political power. Overall, in addition to the actions of Pericles, ideology was a major motivating factor in the Peloponnesian War.

Whilst Pericles role in causing the Peloponnesian war was significant, it wasn't the only factor. Also important was the rivalry between the two polis and their differing political views showing the war to be a multifacted affair.

Section C – Rome

Part 1 – Living in an ancient society

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	1	3	14	33	50	3.3

Points that were required to achieve full marks included the Roman desire to build a navy, their difficulties successfully completing this enterprise due to their inexperience in naval matters, their spirit and daring and determination, the development of the 'raven' and its success as a naval tactic.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	5	5	13	25	26	19	8	3.5

While most students considered the significance from a Roman perspective, some students also rightly considered the Carthaginian side, particularly the demise of Hannibal's subsequent career (although tracking it all the way to his death, was not necessary). Students who focused on Carthage cited the devastating losses of the Carthaginians. Those who considered the event as one strengthening Rome considered Scipio's military tactics and his subsequent elevated status, the harsh peace terms imposed on Carthage and the impact they had on the geopolitics of the Mediterranean.

Question 1c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	14	6	10	10	10	14	13	11	8	3	2	4.3

Students with high-scoring responses considered the degree to which Roman society changed, as well as what did not change, by looking at social, political and economic changes, as well as the military and territorial. Changes include the development of the Roman navy after the first Punic War; territorial growth in Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, Spain and Africa; economic change, particularly the increased numbers of slaves and the expansion of latifundia; and the growing numbers of urban poor. The most notable aspect of society that did not change was the nobility's control over the political structure. A number of students extended their responses to incorporate the Gracchi and even post-Gracchi individuals.

Part 2 – People in power, societies in crisis

Question chosen	none	2	3
%	10	35	55

Essay

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	11	4	5	6	8	6	6	5	6	5	6	5	6	3	5	3	4	3	2	2	1	8

Question 2

This question required students to discuss how the Gallic Wars helped Caesar gain the dictatorship. While it allowed the discussion of other factors, the Gallic Wars needed to feature in the essay, as well as other events that preceded and/or followed the Gallic Wars in relation to Caesar's dictatorship. Some responses evaluated the wars as insignificant, without in turn identifying what was significant, essentially writing a narrative of Caesar's career. Some students structured their responses around themes like violence and use of the military. While a credible argument can be made that Caesar used violence or the military, and that these measures had been introduced as political tools earlier, the focus of the discussion still needed to be Caesar.

Question 3

The question asked how the second triumvirate had an impact on the end of the republic. Many students responded by providing a general survey of causes. For example, '*The Second Triumvirate of Octavian, Mark Antony and Lepidus played a minor role in the fall of the Republic, though it is proven that other individuals had a greater impact. These individuals included Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, Marius and Sulla, Caesar and the First Triumvirate and Cleopatra VII.*' If the question focuses on one element of the sequence, that element should receive sustained and relevant attention throughout the essay. References to other elements are acceptable but should be limited and used strictly to enhance a discussion of the main element.

The following is an example of an upper-middle scoring response to Question 3. The student included three clear paragraphs but lacked some depth of evidence.

The Second Triumvirate was critical in the collapse of the Roman Republic circa 27BC. Following the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44, the pairing of Antony and Octavian defeated the last true believers in the Republic. With the outbreak of conflict in the 2nd Civil war, the Republic was dangerously destabilised in the years following. Finally, the rise to power of Octavian through his exploits in the triumvirate sowed the final collapse of the Republic. This is how the second Triumvirate contributed to the fall.

The battle of Phillipi in 42BC ended the lives of the final true Republicans at the hands of Antony and Octavian. Following the assassination of Caesar in 44BC on the Ides of March, Antony and Octavian pursued Brutus and Cassius. Their defeat and subsequent deaths at the battle represented the end of the last two men acting in the interest of the Republic, men who had killed the "Imperial wolf in republican sheep's clothing" as Humble writes. The acts of the two triumvirs to be meant that little could be done to restore the Republic and that its collapse could only be stalled from then on. This is one such contribution of the 2nd Triumvirate.

The collapse of relations between the triumvirs too caused a rift that would send the Republic asunder. With the breakdown of relations amongst Antony, Octavian, and Lepidus, each man came into possession of their own lands and forces which were used against one another. This second civil war greatly injured the stability of the Republican system, which Humble argues could only remedied with "The rule of one man". This instability would be the wedge Octavian uses to assert his power later on, a grand contribution by the 2nd Triumvirate to the collapse.

Following on from this, the exploits of Octavian were critical to the fall following the massive increase of his power. With the end of the Triumvirate, Octavian maintained control over all the west and east which he has seized from Antony and Lepidus. This massive boost in power following the Triumvirates own collapse allowed for the rise of Octavian, eventuating in his

taking of the title 'Princeps' and 'Augustus', essentially marking the end of the Republic. This contribution in the 2nd Triumvirates collapse was crucial to the fall of the Republic.

In total, the Triumvirate of Antony, Lepidus and Octavian was significant in contributing to the fall of the Republic. The deaths of Brutus and Cassius at Phillipi was the work of Triumvirs Antony and Octavian. The civil war following shook the unity of the Republic to near collapse, and the exploits of the Triumvir Octavian were critical in finally ending the Republic. This is the contribution made to the end of the Republic by the Second Triumvirate.