2024 VCE Ancient History external assessment report

General comments

Overall, students demonstrated a clear understanding of what was required by the different types of questions in the 2024 VCE Ancient History examination. Most responses showed an effort to use a structure that emphasised the relevance to the question. The quality of essays was very good.

Two areas that remain a challenge for students are using specific historical details (especially dates) to substantiate factual claims, and using quotations (from historians or historical persons) to support interpretations.

Some general observations and advice based on common issues are as follows:

* Students should carefully read the questions and identify the command term, any key terms in the question (especially those reflecting the key knowledge in the study design), which if any source to use, what if any timeframe the question relates to and the interactions between the elements of the question.
* Students should carefully read the explanatory notes to the sources. They are useful and provide contextual information which can help the student to avoid errors of interpretation (especially for visual sources which are not necessarily self-explanatory).
* Students should not use Egyptian, Greek or Latin words without defining and explaining them. Where a standard English word can convey the meaning, that should be used. Where the word has a specialised historical meaning, it must be unpacked to show its relevance.
* When quoting a historian, the relevance of the quotation must be made clear – it either supports an assessment the student has just made or provides a starting point for such an assessment.
* Key terms in questions should be defined in some way in the response (especially for more challenging questions and essay topics). This is useful to give the response a clear focus and enhance the relevance of what the student writes. In the essays, for example, very few students ever explicitly stated what was meant by ‘the crisis of the Amarna Period’, ‘outcome of the Decelean (Ionian) War’ or ‘the downfall of the Roman Republic’.
* Students should not claim that things were ‘inevitable’ or ‘obvious’ (if they were we would have no need to make historical arguments).
* Students should avoid counterfactuals; it is not good history writing to base an argument on what might have happened, for example, if there was no Second Triumvirate and there was a free-for-all civil conflict between Octavian, Antony, Lepidus, the liberatores and Sextus Pompey.

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

The questions in Section A required students to use the sources provided and/or their own knowledge to write short-answer responses.

For ‘outline’ questions:

* Students were required to demonstrate comprehension of the material in the source.
* High-scoring responses included at least three distinct points from the source, and embedded these clearly within a sentence that indicated the student comprehended the meaning of the quotation in relation to what the question was asking.
* Bullet points were not sufficient for full marks in an outline question.
* No ‘own knowledge’ is required from outside the source, for an outline question. This includes additional context, historical information, explanation or quotations from other historians or historical perspectives. This sort of material wastes the student’s time and cannot contribute to the mark.
* Students should use quotation marks to better signal what they are taking from a written source, but this is not essential.
* It is not necessary to insert ‘(Source 1)’, ‘as O Murray writes in Early Greece’, ‘according to Polybius’ or similar after the quotation from the source, since it is obvious where the information is coming from.

For ‘describe’ questions:

* Students were required to provide accurate characteristics, features and qualities of a particular topic.
* Specific historical knowledge is expected (such as names, dates, facts, figures, people, places, events, statistics), but less detail is required compared to an explain, analyse or evaluate question.
* One main point is sufficient for a high-scoring response if it is fully detailed, relevant and accurate; two points with less detail is also acceptable; three or four points that are broadly relevant could also be acceptable for a high-scoring response, although this approach runs the risk of creating a list more than a description. Examples of main points in relation to the questions would be: Rameses II’s relationship with Kadesh; Solon’s creation of wealth-based classes; Marius’s military reforms.
* Some background information or comment on later developments may be appropriate, but the response does not require the kind of causes and consequence expected in an explain question, and providing too much context is likely to miss the point of the question.
* Refuting the assertion in the question or trying to evaluate it in relation to other historical factors is beyond the scope of the question.
* Quotations are not necessary since describe questions ask for facts rather than interpretations.

For ‘explain’ questions:

* A high-scoring response typically starts with a clear assertion about the main element of the question and supports that assertion with relevant evidence (and a clear sequence of cause and effect where appropriate).
* References to the source must be explicit. Students should not make a claim and then just write ‘as shown in the source’. For visual sources especially, this requires the student to describe the relevant element of the image. For example, a student might write ‘Source 2 shows common everyday practices’ without saying where in the image this is specifically shown. Such a reference, even if literally true, could be a lucky guess and does not add much to the response. Instead, a student should write ‘Source 2 shows common everyday practices such as fishing and fowling, as depicted in the top right-hand part of the image’.
* When handling a source with a lot of information (such as Source 8), one strategy is to write a response that parallels the schema of the information in the source (in this case, monarchy, consul and other magistrates, Senate, assemblies), adding specific information for each of these elements in turn.
* The elements of the study design that deal with the more social aspects of an ancient civilisation are an opportunity for students to show an understanding of what made that civilisation distinct. These elements include ‘priesthoods, scribes, artisans, agricultural workers’ (Egypt), ‘men, women, metics and slaves’ (Greece), ‘the paterfamilias, the role of women, the social hierarchy, relationships between patrons and clients, the role of slaves’ (Rome). Students should aim to discuss these elements in their original sociohistorical contexts and with specific details that reflect the human reality of that civilisation.
* Quotations from historians or historical persons (other than the source) can be used to support an explanation but are not essential.

For ‘analyse’ or ‘evaluate’ questions:

* Generally, an evaluate question is an implicit ‘to what extent’ question and, generally, the student should take the position of ‘to some extent’. It is rare that a question would be asked for which the best response is a definitive ‘this person was entirely responsible …’ or similar. Therefore, students should generally try to see more than one side of the story or consider a range of factors as they work towards a judgement about the main element of the question.
* By comparison, an analyse question tends to be a ‘deep dive’ question, asking for a detailed and focused discussion of whatever the question is about (including closely related elements). This makes an analyse question something like an explain question with a greater expected level of detail. An effective analysis focuses on the main element of the question and avoids exploring alternative explanations, as would be required in an evaluation.
* ‘Evidence’ in both evaluate and analyse questions means using sources (other than the ones in the examination Sources Book). This meaning of evidence is in keeping with the study design, which refers to ‘using historical sources (primary sources and historical interpretations) as evidence’. Therefore, full marks are only given to responses that include such sources (in addition to historical details); that is, quotations from historians or historical persons.

Question 1, Egypt

Question 1a.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
| % | 4 | 5 | 32 | 63 | 2.6 |

Relevant points from the source included:

* Military successes ‘brought an influx of wealth into the Egyptian economy’.
* ‘Taxes and tribute’ came from many different lands.
* The influx of wealth ‘allowed one of the most prolific building programs in Egyptian history’.
* Thutmosis’ devotion to the gods encouraged ‘the rebuilding and embellishment of many of the key religious sites’.
* ‘Forts were constructed, canals reopened and naval ports expanded.’
* ‘For over 50 years Thutmose dominated Egypt and the Near East.’

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

Thutmosis III contributed to the power of Egypt through his military successes which ‘brought an influx of wealth into the Egyptian economy’. This wealth ‘allowed one of the most prolific building programs in Egyptian history’. Under Thutmosis III, ‘Forts were constructed, canals reopened and naval ports expanded.’

Question 1b.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
| % | 8 | 13 | 36 | 24 | 14 | 5 | 2 |

The wording of this question was somewhat ambiguous – it could imply changes in the New Kingdom relative to earlier periods or it could imply changes during the course of the New Kingdom. Either interpretation was acceptable.

Relevant information reflecting a student’s ‘own knowledge’ included (but was not limited to):

* Access to the afterlife (entering the Field of Reeds) became more widely available, not just restricted to the pharaoh; there was a kind of ‘democratisation of death’ (at least among elite Egyptians).
* Tomb paintings were created both to commemorate the life of the dead person and as an indication of the type of lifestyle they hoped for in the afterlife.
* Tombs (as in the Valley of the Kings) were a hallmark of New Kingdom Egypt, rather than the pyramids of earlier dynasties.
* Mortuary temples were constructed separately from tombs (at Karnak, for example).
* People of elite status (nobles) in the Eighteenth Dynasty invested significant energy, time and resources in funerary customs.
* The Book of the Dead became a common funerary text (evolving out of the earlier Pyramid Text and Coffin Texts).
* Mummification techniques improved.
* The role of Osiris in funerary practices was fully developed.
* Large amounts of tomb goods were placed in tombs to protect and sustain the deceased; many of these were objects of everyday use (such as furniture and food) but they also included luxury items (such as jewellery) and items of religious significance (shabtis, canopic jars).
* Amun became the pre-eminent god (relative to Ra) of the Thebes-based royalty.
* During the reign of Amenhotep III, the Aten was elevated and then given prominence by Akhenaten at the expense of the other gods, before a restoration occurred under Tutankhamun.

Relevant features of the source included:

* The iconography (composition) is a common depiction of religious beliefs in the afterlife and immortality.
* These tomb decorations serve to identify the deceased (Nakht) and to provide sustenance for the dead, with the scene depicting offerings of food (the piles of animals, baskets, jars, wine-making).
* At the top right of the image, Nakht is shown in the frequently depicted fishing and fowling scene, which provides both food and entertainment in the afterlife.
* These scenes may have had a further important motif in showing the family of the deceased together, suggesting that one purpose of the tomb scenes was to guarantee their company beyond death.

A common error was students assuming the image depicted a pharaoh, although the explanatory note to the source made it clear it was the tomb of Nakht, a scribe and astronomer. Some of these students assumed it was Amenhotep III, presumably because he is mentioned in the explanatory note. Another was that few students mentioned the Book of the Dead or ‘fishing and fowling’ (despite the ubiquity of that image in tomb art). Some students focused on the rise of Atenism under Amenhotep III and Akhenaten, and did not discuss funerary customs at all.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

In Source 2 the Field of Reeds is depicted at the top right in the illustration of Nakht’s tomb. This was a crucial part of the New Kingdom Egyptian afterlife and was accessible to nobles rather than just the kings as in earlier periods. Funerary customs are such as the opening of the mouth ceremony and the use of spells in the Book of the Dead were common funerary practices Egyptian afterlife and would occur before the deceased individual was then judged against a feather truth by Osiris. The Egyptian vision of the afterlife is reflected in the greenery and the inundated Nile at the top of Source 2 where Nakht enjoys fishing and hunting birds, common pastimes of the nobility. He and his wife also receive offerings of fruit, fish and birds to sustain them in the afterlife. However, these practices changed during the Amana period (1353 to 1336). Funeral customs such as mummification did remain however predominantly traditional funeral practices and beliefs in general will completely shifted with a monotheistic focus on the Aten as opposed to the worship of multiple gods.

Question 1c.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
| % | 18 | 21 | 27 | 21 | 13 | 1.9 |

Relevant information reflecting a student’s ‘own knowledge’ included (but was not limited to):

* Rameses II’s peace treaty with the Hittites in 1258 (some years after the Battle of Kadesh) gave Egypt access to ports in Hittite territory and thus access to trade in the eastern Mediterranean (Syria, Lebanon).
* By securing the borders through military campaigns, Rameses II increased Egypt’s wealth, and widened its scope for commerce, trade and tribute in the Near East and East Africa.
* He also conquered new lands in Syria and Canaan, which allowed Egypt to control vital trade routes.
* Rameses II also maintained control over Nubia which granted access to gold mines and other areas for trade in Africa.
* Tribute and booty such as ebony, ivory, animal skins, gold and exotic animals resulted from these activities.

Some students incorrectly interpreted ‘tribute’ to mean how Rameses II gave tribute (i.e. to the gods), but this is not how the term is used in the study design. Some responses discussed Rameses II’s military campaigns and his construction of Pi-Ramesses, but unless these points could be linked to commerce, trade and tribute they were unlikely to meet the requirements of the question.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

Rameses II’s treaty with Hattusili III around 1258 BCE (some 15 years after the Battle of Kadesh) enabled Rameses II access to greater trade routes in Syria and access to valuable goods like incense and semi-precious stones. By defeating the Libyans he ascended over East Africa and control over Nubia gave him access to gold and exotic animal skins which could be used to embellish temples in Egypt, contributing to building programs and religious sectors (such as at Pi-Ramesses and Abu Simbel). Egypt’s political and military dominance of the region at this time a flow of tribute and trade goods from neighbouring countries.

Question 1d.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
| % | 4 | 6 | 30 | 31 | 20 | 8 | 2.8 |

This question specifically asked about the ‘status’ of women in New Kingdom Egypt. The assessment allowed for a fairly broad definition of ‘status’ so it was reasonable for students to discuss the roles and responsibilities of women in addition to the main focus of social position.

The best responses recognised that the source represented only a very narrow experience, that of the most elite women, which was distinct from the status of the vast majority of women in Egypt.

Relevant information reflecting a student’s ‘own knowledge’ included (but was not limited to):

* Royal women enjoyed high status in Egypt based on their relationship with the pharaoh, the most prominent being the pharaoh’s mother, wives (especially Great Royal Wife), sisters and daughters.
* The most prominent women of the period (acting as kings, regents, high priestesses or otherwise influential) included Ahhotep, Hatshepsut, Tiye, Nefertiti, Neferneferuaten, Nefertari and Tausret.
* The title ‘God’s Wife of Amun’ belonged to the highest-ranking priestess of the Amum cult. At the beginning of the New Kingdom, the title was associated with royalty, usually kings’ wives or kings’ mothers.
* Knowledge of non-royal women comes from sources written by men, which often hold stereotypical views.
* Woman married young (around 13) and their main duties would involve management of the household and child-rearing.
* Legal texts and tax records reveal that women were theoretically equal under the law and were able to enter contracts, inherit and own property independently, initiate court cases and divorce.
* Women would derive their social status from their male relatives, providing upper-class women with opportunities to become priestesses and chantresses. Other women worked in positions such as singer, dancer, mourner, doctor, weaver or baker, and lower-class women might work alongside their husbands, in the fields or as servants.

Relevant points from the source included:

* the description of an elite woman as ‘great in favour, great in amiability’
* titles or descriptors such as ‘great king’s wife’, ‘king’s mother’, ‘divine consort’
* Tetisheri being the recipient of honours from Ahmose: mortuary chapel, pyramid, trees, land, herds, etc.
* the king expressing that he ‘greatly loved her, beyond everything’.

A common error was to make broad claims about women being limited to domestic roles; these kinds of comments could have been generically (and stereotypically) applied to any pre-modern civilisation. Some students incorrectly took the source as representative of the status of all Egyptian women (i.e. they were all held in high esteem and honoured with monuments).

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

Royal women held great status in an Egypt as shown in Source 3 three where Ahmose I outlines the ‘mortuary chapel…pyramid and a house’ he built in dedication to his grandmother, Tetisheri. Moreover, he promises ‘offerings shall be founded, equipped with people’ further displaying the gifts deserved by Tetisheri as an influential royal woman. The high status of women can also be seen in their important religious and political roles as God’s Wife and Great Royal Wife, positions held by women such as Hatshepsut and Nefertiti. Non-royal women held a significantly lower status. However, a general sense of quality can be observed in New Kingdom Egypt. Women’s status in society was often linked to men but they were also active in a wide variety of jobs as well as keepers of the house and as mothers. The status of women is also shown by the way they could own land, initiate divorce and go to court.

Question 1e.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | Average |
| % | 9 | 7 | 13 | 20 | 19 | 12 | 9 | 8 | 3 | 3.6 |

The best responses to this question demonstrated understanding that the question required a knowledge of specific structures built by Amenhotep III and Akhenaten, while also linking the structures (and specific features of those structures) to political and social purposes.

No particular comparison was required, although many students were able to usefully discuss or contrast the development of Atenism from Amenhotep III to Akhenaten.

Note that in the case of Egypt, referring to specific examples of material culture is considered to be primary source evidence (this includes features of specific buildings, inscriptions on stelae, carvings, tomb paintings or similar). Thus, for this question, accurately describing the building projects of Amenhotep III and Akhenaten would also meet the requirements of primary source evidence.

Relevant information reflecting a student’s ‘own knowledge’ included (but was not limited to):

Amenhotep III:

* By the reign of Amenhotep III, the Great Temple of Amun at Karnak had become so rich and powerful that its priesthood posed a threat to the supremacy of the king.
* In a move probably designed to constrain the power of the Great Temple, he built an enormous new royal palace at Malkata, across the Nile from the Great Temple, and filled it with his most powerful administrators.
* Amenhotep erected hundreds of statues of Sekhmet in the Precinct of Mut at Karnak, a reference to the old traditional solar cults of Memphis and Heliopolis, as demonstrated by the fact that most of Amenhotep’s statues of her depict her wearing the solar disc on her head.
* He built a monumental mortuary temple at Kom el-Hetan, which was the largest funerary construction in the whole region of Thebes. The temple featured many references to the solar cult, including a sun court and hundreds of statues of Sekhmet wearing the solar disc.
* He incorporated a monumental sun court into the temple at Luxor, south of Karnak.
* Statues of Amenhotep were erected in his palace, mortuary temple and elsewhere, depicting him in a way that very much resembles the distinctive way in which Amun is portrayed: with a youthful, serene face and widely set almond-shaped eyes.
* At Thebes, Colossi of Memnon in his image protected his funerary temple.

Akhenaten:

* Amenhotep IV began his reign with a major building program at Karnak (the heart of the Amun cult), including depictions of the Aten.
* While the Aten was not new, it became increasingly prominent in the later years of Amenhotep III’s reign, along with depictions of Nefertiti.
* Akhenaten relocated the capital to middle Egypt during the fifth year of his reign; in this way, he distanced himself from the court at Thebes and the Amun priesthood.
* The creation of Amarna shifted religious life to a focus on the worship of the Aten, mediated through the person of the king, while excluding the other gods.
* The prominent use of light talatat (60 x 25 cm) blocks allowed buildings to be erected quickly.
* These blocks were used during the reign of Akhenaten to build temples dedicated to the Aten at Karnak and Amarna/Akhetaten.
* Palaces and temples built included the Great Temple of the Aten, the Small Temple of the Aten and the Temple of Amenhotep IV; these contained large numbers of altars.
* Akhenaten introduced architectural innovations, most notably the open roof, aiming for the removal of all darkness – even lintels from doorways were removed to avoid shadows.
* The Aten was worshipped by the king in open courtyards.

Some responses did not really distinguish between political and social purposes, or they mentioned building projects without presenting any argument about their purposes. Another common error was to include biographies of Amenhotep III and/or Akhenaten (discussing diplomacy, the Amarna Letters, Atenism in detail), which was not the focus of the question. Students were typically more confident in their descriptions of Akhenaten’s building projects, especially Amarna/Akhetaten, and some students only discussed Akhenaten.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

Amenhotep III and Akhenaten both use building programs in a way that promoted their political and social agendas. Amenhotep III’s rule ended in approximately 1356 BCE after nearly forty years and he carried out prolific building campaigns across in a way that demonstrated the stability and strength of his long reign. His palace of Malkata completed in year 29 was more colossal and extravagant than any other building of his era – it was 32 hectares in size with gardens, orchards, courtyards, housing and temples. The palace expressed his wealth as king and thus the wealth and power of the state. The name of the palace translated to ‘Palace of the Dazzling Aten’, showcasing a more complex political and social purpose as Amenhotep III sought to elevate the sun god, Aten, which ‘sowed the seeds’ (Redford) for more dramatic social and political change.

The building programs of Akhenaten during his religious revolution further showcases the use of building for social and political purposes. Firstly his contributions to the temples at Karnak, including the Gempaaten, and the construction of open-air to temples represented a shift of religious beliefs that disrupted the political and social traditions of Egypt by elevating the Aten. By year 5 of Akhenaten’s reign he had completely uprooted and transferred the capital of Egypt 400 km from Thebes to his new city, Akhetaten, using smaller talatat blocks to accelerate the building process. The creation of Akhetaten furthered his political aims of shifting Egyptian religion and royal administration to be built around the Aten. Inscriptions and carvings at Akhetaten show the royal family touched by the rays of the sun and the open-air structures further emphasised the dominance of the solar disc. The shift to Atenism involved ‘persecution…directed at Amun’ (Hornung), undermining the strength of that priesthood in favour of his new deity since worship of the Aten and of Amun ‘could no longer be carried out side by side’ (Alder).

Thus, the building projects of both Akhenaten and his father Amenhotep III were representative of complex political and social agendas.

Question 2, Greece

Question 2a.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
| % | 2 | 8 | 26 | 65 | 2.5 |

Relevant points from the source included:

* ‘usurpers began to seize autocratic power in the more advanced cities’
* Tyrannies ‘usually lasted for some two generations before they were overthrown’.
* Tyranny was ‘one of the prevalent forms of government in the Greek cities’.
* Tyrants ‘dominated the political and artistic life of the Greek world’.
* Tyrants ‘captured the popular imagination in tradition’.
* Tyranny ‘permanently influenced Greek political attitudes against monarchy’.
* Tyranny is ‘defined as absolute rule exercised contrary to customary law’.
* Tyranny is ‘contrasted with kingship’.
* Tyranny is considered to be ‘the worst possible form of government’.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

Some features of tyranny in ancient Greece was that it was ‘a series of usurpers began to seize autocratic power in the more advanced cities’. Tyrants ‘dominated the political and artistic life of the Greek world’. Tyranny was a form of rule ‘exercised contrary to customary law [and] contrasted with kingship’ which followed customary rules.

Question 2b.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
| % | 3 | 4 | 20 | 36 | 26 | 12 | 3.1 |

This question specifically asked about the ‘role and status’ of women in Ancient Greece. Thus, students were expected to discuss both the roles and responsibilities of women and their social position.

The question was also about women in Ancient Greece generally, not just in one polis, and most responses were able to contrast Sparta and Athens.

Relevant information reflecting a student’s ‘own knowledge’ included (but was not limited to):

* The limited role of women in public and political life was common across the Greek world.
* The status of women differed in degree from city-state to city-state (e.g. Athens to Sparta) and the different status of different women (citizens/slaves/rich/poor) meant they had different roles.
* Athenian women were citizens but had no political or civic rights or roles; they were excluded from the duties and privileges shared by male citizens (e.g. military duty, voting).
* They were considered minors under the care of a male guardian (e.g. father, husband).
* Athenian women could not buy or own land in their own right, but could inherit.
* Average marriage age (arranged marriage) was 14 years; divorce was possible, but tended to be initiated or directed by men.
* Women had a prominent role in maintaining the household (child-rearing, cooking, cleaning, weaving, managing accounts, managing slaves or servants).
* Women could work selling goods in the marketplace or as midwives, nurses, musicians and entertainers.
* The famous Periclean comment (that women should be ‘seen but not heard’) was not fully accurate; aristocratic women were involved in religious roles (e.g. Thesmophoria and Panathenaea festivals) and the existence of prominent female roles in tragedy and comedy suggests some complexity in attitudes.
* Women in Athens held positions as priestesses, oracles and courtesans (hetairai).
* Female deities represented important concepts (e.g. Dike/Justice, Sophia/Wisdom, Eirene/Peace) and Athene had an important role as the chief deity of the city.
* In Sparta, there was some equality with men in terms of education and physical exercise.
* Average marriage age in Sparta was 18 years, and women’s main role was service to the state by bearing children.
* Women were free to speak in political debates but could not hold political office or vote.
* Spartan women did not undertake domestic duties like cooking and weaving, which was the work of slaves.
* They had some degree of independence because men lived a communal, militaristic life in barracks.
* Spartan women increasingly became prominent landowners as men were killed.

Relevant features of the source included:

* The source shows women engaged in funerary preparations and mourning – one of the roles undertaken by women.
* The women are more fully covered than the bare-shouldered men, indicating the modesty that women were expected to maintain.
* The women have paler skin (which has partially flaked off the two female figures to the right); this convention reflects the expectation that women will spend more time indoors than men.
* Men have a more active role as charioteers.
* The child-sized figure at the right of the image is positioned closer to the women, emphasising their role as caretakers of children.

A common error was to make broad claims about women being limited to domestic roles; these kinds of comments could have been generically (and stereotypically) applied to any pre-modern civilisation, and did not usually demonstrate an understanding of what ‘domestic roles’ might entail beyond food preparation and child-rearing. Some students incorrectly took the source as showing the extent of women’s public roles (i.e. the only time they were allowed out of the house was to attend funerals). Some students only wrote about women in Athens or in Sparta, which was not sufficient to address the question fully.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

Women were considered to be citizens of less value in ancient Greece, evident in their civic and political limitations. In all Greek cities, women were unable to attend assemblies, vote, hold political officers or enter into legal contracts without the permission of their male guardian. There was ‘no alternative to marriage for respectable girls’, with a woman’s main role being the production of legitimate heirs for her husband (Pomeroy). In Athens, women were largely confined to the household where they raised and educated children, prepared meals, did household tasks such as weaving and spinning wool, took care of household finances. The pale skin of the women in the source is meant to reflect their indoors-based life. Women did have some involvement in religious activities, such as funerals (as shown in the source) or festivals such as the Panathenae. By contrast women in Sparta enjoyed somewhat more freedoms. They were able to speak in public but did not hold office and they took part in physical training to help them to have strong babies who would grow up to be soldiers.

Question 2c.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
| % | 18 | 21 | 24 | 20 | 17 | 2.0 |

Relevant information reflecting a student’s ‘own knowledge’ included (but was not limited to):

* In the early 6th century BCE (594/3), the archon Solon created four classes, to make wealth (determined by the productivity of land) rather than birth the basis for political participation.
* The classes were the pentakosiomedimni (the ‘500-bushel men’), the hippeis (cavalry, producing 300–500 bushels), zeugitae (hoplites, producing 200–300 bushels) and the thetes (labourers with fewer than 200 bushels).
* These reforms created greater social mobility, with non-aristocrats able to access political office.
* The archonship was open to the first (and possibly second) class.
* The Boule (Council of 400) was open to the top three classes.
* The Heliaea (public court) gave lower classes some protection through right of appeal.
* The Ekklesia (Assembly) was open to all citizens, including thetes.
* The Areopagus (a court of ex-archons that tried offences against the state) was left untouched, which left some power in the hands of the aristocracy, while the Assembly and the Council became more representative of the community.
* The reforms also introduced a comprehensive law-code that was recorded and available to all for consultation (this meant the laws could actually be enforced and it was possible to seek redress).
* The Athenian people were also given a judicial function; it gave them the ability to challenge and curb the powers of the elite.

A common error was that many responses focused on economic changes without discussing political changes. Many referred to the seisactheia (‘shaking off of burdens’) and went into some detail about debt slavery and the factional tensions between the hillmen and the plainsmen. However, this social background and the economic problems were not the point of the question.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

Solon provided more power to the non-aristocratic classes of Athens by organising the Athenian people into four distinct classes. They were the pentacosiomedimnoi (‘500 bushel men’ who could produce 500 bushels of goods per year), the hippies (300 bushels), the zeugitae (200 bushels) and the thetes (less than 200 bushels). Only the top two class could be archons (and thus sit in the Areopagus) while the top three class were able to sit in the Boule (Council of 400) which set the agenda which the Ecclesia (general assembly of all citizens) voted on.

Question 2d.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
| % | 7 | 12 | 27 | 27 | 18 | 9 | 2.6 |

Relevant information reflecting a student’s ‘own knowledge’ included (but was not limited to):

* Cleon is first mentioned when launching a political attack on Pericles (431 BCE).
* Cleon rose to prominence after the death of Pericles; he was in political competition with Nicias, and by 425 BCE, Cleon was an influential figure in the Assembly.
* Cleon influenced the shift in military strategy from Periclean cautious expansionism to the aggressive militarism of the Archidamian War.
* Cleon was known for his violent and ruthless measures, advocating for the death of rebels at Mytilene (428 BCE).
* He is believed to be behind the Thoudippos Decree of 425 BCE that trebled contributions by allies to the war, further alienating members of the Delian League.
* Cleon demonstrated courage and initiative in the siege and victory over Spartans at Sphacteria/Pylos (425 BCE), in his abuse of a Spartan embassy to Athens seeking truce and as strategos at Pylos, forcing Spartans to surrender.
* He campaigned against Brasidas in northern Greece (424–422 BCE) to offset Spartan inroads with Athenian allies.
* The death of Cleon at Amphipolis (where Brasidas also died) in 422 BCE removed a political obstacle to peace with Sparta, leading to the end of the Archidamnian War with the Peace of Nicias in 421 BCE.

Relevant points from the source included:

* Cleon’s leadership began ‘After the death of Pericles’.
* Cleon was ‘the leader of the people’ (in contrast to Nicias, leader of the aristocratic faction).
* Cleon ‘corrupted the people by his violent methods’.
* Cleon ‘shouted on the public platform … used abusive language and … spoke with his cloak girt up about him’ in comparison to those who behaved and dressed properly.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

Cleon‘s political leadership influenced Athens to have an aggressive approach in the Archidamian War (431 to 421). Following Pericles’ death by plague in 429, Cleon ‘corrupted the people by his violent methods’ and Athens abandoned Pericles defensive plan. As the ‘leader of the people’, Cleon demonstrated his hawkish nature against his rival, the timid and cautious Nicias, ‘leader of the aristocratic party’. Cleon’s offensive course of action was demonstrated at Battle of Pylos in 425 and his aggressive stance was displayed in the Mytilene of 427, encouraging punishment rather than forgiveness. Furthermore, Cleon influenced Athenian involvement in the war was demonstrated by his warmongering attitude against the Spartan general Brasidas in the Battle of Amphipolis in 422. Both Cleon and Brasidas died in the battle, bringing Cleon’s aggressive influence on Athens to an end.

Question 2e.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | Average |
| % | 9 | 7 | 12 | 18 | 18 | 11 | 11 | 8 | 5 | 3.8 |

The best responses to this question began with a clear definition of the Delian League (its purposes and structure) and a clear, evaluative judgement which was then developed in the body of the response. No particular end date is specified in the question, but most students understood the question to cover the period to 404 BCE.

The typical argument was that any benefits that may have existed in terms of an anti-Persian defence alliance were eventually eroded by the Athenian hegemony and exploitation of its so-called allies.

Relevant information reflecting a student’s ‘own knowledge’ included (but was not limited to):

Benefits:

* The Delian League was established in 478 BCE as a voluntary alliance against Persia, and member allies pledged allegiance, motivated by revenge, the need for defence and a desire to liberate city-states under Persian control.
* Provided protection against Persia (an increasingly diminishing threat after the Battle of Eurymedon in 466 BCE and the purported Peace of Callias of 449 BCE).
* Provided protection against piracy (diminished after Cimon’s maritime successes in the 460s BCE).
* Provided protection against Spartans and the Peloponnesian League after the outbreak of the First Peloponnesian War (460 BCE).
* Led to increased trade (growing prosperity due to a secure Aegean and connection with the wider Athenian empire).
* Democratic governments replaced oligarchies (but this was not always a welcome change).

Detriments:

* After 460 BCE, Athens was increasingly transforming alliance into a hegemony with an empire they wanted to protect.
* Members had to provide ships or money (the latter increasingly preferred by Athens).
* Member status steadily changed from ‘ally’ to ‘subject state’ (in reality if not in name).
* Coercion and loss of independence was seen through Athenian intervention in internal affairs (democratic constitutions instituted, supervision and selection of Council and imposition of rules of selection such as age limit, repeat appointments), establishment of garrisons and cleruchies, and the oath of allegiance to Athens being required (Erythrae decree, Calchis decree).
* Athenian commissioners and inspectors interfered in judicial and administrative matters; court cases were to be heard in Athens (also requiring fees to be paid).
* Members bore an economic cost in annual tribute and contribution to Athene’s Panathenaic festival (grain, cow, panoply).
* Members were required to use Athenian currency, weight and measures (Calchis decree).
* The Delian League treasury was moved from Delos to Athens (454 BCE) and the funds were used as determined by the Athenian Assembly (e.g. for rebuilding the Parthenon).
* Members were forced to participate in Athenian military campaigns, which furthered Athens’ own interests (e.g. Aegina 459 BCE, Boeotia, Battle of Oenophyta, democracy at Thebes 458 BCE, Battle of Tanagra 457 BCE).
* Members were not permitted to leave, as can be seen in the case of Samos, an independent ally forcefully subjugated with dismantling of walls, payment of fine, surrender of navy to Athens, pledge of allegiance (440 BCE), the punishment of the rebellious Mytilene (427 BCE).

Many students incorrectly gave the Megaran Decree as an example of Athens punishing a Delian League member (Megara had returned to the Peloponnesian League by that time). Some responses began with a detailed review of the Greco-Persian Wars and the 50 or so years prior to 460 BCE; while this amount of context could be relevant in an essay, these detailed backgrounds usually came at the expense of focus on the time period specified in the question. A few students mentioned the revolts on Naxos and Thasos (469 and 465 BCE respectively); these were, properly speaking, before the timeframe specified in the question, but could be useful to provide context. The destruction of Melos (416 BCE) was also mentioned in a few responses; while this event might demonstrate the nature of the Athenian democracy at this time, Melos was not a member of the Delian League.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

After 460 BCE, it was largely not beneficial for a Greek city state to be a member of the Delian League. The original purpose of the league was to act as a defence alliance against Persia with the smaller Aegean states providing ships or money to Athens in return for military protection. However, by 460 BCE Athens had largely defeated the Persians and this transformed the Delian League from a league that benefitted at all to one that only benefitted Athens by and after 460 BCE. Despite the absence of a credible Persian threat after 449 with the Peace of Callias, Athens continued to collect tribute from the allies and used it for the beautification of their polis with them claiming that they were ‘not obliged’ to justify how ‘they spent the allies’ money’ (Thucydides). Rather than paying to ensure their safety against Persia the members of the Delian League were now paying for Athens to repair the Parthenon, especially after the Delian treasury was moved to Athens in 454 BCE. While it was clearly no longer beneficial for a Greek city state to be a member of the Delian League after 460 BCE due to the absence Persian threat, it was worse for a polis to revolt against Athens or refused to subject themselves to Athens’ control. Those city states which attempted to leave the League face brutal punishments. For example, after the city of Scione in northern Greece defected to the Spartans in 423 BCE, the Athenians recaptured it and killed the entire adult population and made slaves of the women and children. The Athenians were equally brutal to those that attempted to resist subjugation, such as at Melos. Melos refused to be subjected to Athenian rule in 416 BCE and Athens once more killed the entire male population, sold the women and children into slavery and established a cleruchy (military colony) on the island. Those not punished so drastically by Athens still faced humiliation, for example, after the revolt of Euboea in 446 BC not only did Athens expel the Chalcidian elite and establish a garrison there but also made all Chalcidian men of fighting age swear a humiliating oath of eternal loyalty to Athens (known as the Chalcis Decree). Therefore this makes it clear that while there was no longer any benefits for the city states in the Delian League after 460 BCE it was safer for them to remain in the Delian League than to suffer the ‘evils’ that the Athenians would commit against subject states that revolted (Buckley).

Question 3, Rome

Question 3a.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
| % | 2 | 5 | 13 | 80 | 2.7 |

Relevant points from the source included:

* Consuls had almost uncontrolled power for ‘preparation for war and the general conduct of operations in the field’.
* Consuls could ‘make what demands they choose on the allies’.
* Consuls could ‘appoint military tribunes’.
* Consuls could ‘levy soldiers and select those who are fittest for service’.
* Consuls could inflict ‘punishment on anyone under their command’.
* Consuls could ‘spend any sum they decide upon from the public funds’.

The question specifically asked about the military powers of the consul; therefore, points about the consul’s civil role were not acceptable for this question.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

Consuls had almost ‘uncontrolled power’ in ‘preparation for war’ and ‘operations in the field’. Consuls were allowed to ‘levy soldiers and select those who are fittest for service’. They could also inflict ‘punishment on anyone under their command’.

Question 3b.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
| % | 3 | 3 | 19 | 43 | 23 | 9 | 3.1 |

Relevant information reflecting a student’s ‘own knowledge’ included (but was not limited to):

* political changes arising immediately from the Revolution of 509 BCE, including details about Lucius Junius Brutus’ part in the overthrow of Tarquinius Superbus and ending the monarchy
* further elaboration on the roles of the consul (including explaining what imperium means), dictator, other magistracies, Senate and the popular assemblies
* relationships with the Latin League (who sided with Tarquinius in an attempt to regain his throne)
* the Twelve Tables (as new legal structures were explored)
* the Conflict of the Orders (as social systems changed in the new republic)
* checks and balances inherent in the system through annuality and collegiality
* the elements of democracy in the way the assemblies work
* the largely oligarchic nature of the system in practice.

Relevant points from the source included:

* ‘the monarchy was abolished’
* ‘two annual magistrates named consuls … were established’
* The consuls and their ‘subordinate officers’ ‘were responsible for the financial and general administration of the state’.
* Other magistrates such as ‘censors and aediles’ did not obtain imperium.
* The ‘extraordinary emergency’ magistracy of the dictator was established.
* Consuls relied heavily on the Council of Elders (i.e. the Senate).
* The Comitia Centuriata chose the consuls.
* The Comitia Curiata conferred executive authority on the consuls and ‘gained increasing political influence’.

This seemed to be a case where the source did so much of the work that students did not know what else to do with it. Students often reworked the source into a solid description of political changes without adding much else.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

The Revolution of 509 BCE marked the beginning of the Roman Republic after ‘the monarch was abolished’. Following the expulsion of the last king, Tarquinius Superbus, after his son Sextus raped Lucretia, kings were ‘an object of hatred’ (Beard). Rome therefore established a system that would distribute power amongst the people in magistracies and assemblies in addition to the senate. The ‘executive authority’ was conferred by the Comitia Curiata on the consuls elected by the Centuriate Assembly but the power granted to consuls or dictators was of limited duration and most magistrates had to share their role. The patrician Senate controlled the treasury and affairs of the state such as building programs. The plebeians were also able to gain power following the revolution in 509 starting in 494 with the First Seccession, refusing to fight in the military until their grievances were. Further political change flowed from the revolution, with the introduction of laws in the Twelve Tables (449), the Licinian-Sextian laws (367) allowing plebeians to run for consul, the Lex Genucia (342) making a plebeian consul compulsory and eventually the Hortensian Laws (287) allowing laws made in the Plebeian Council applicable to all. Thus the revolution in 509 caused political change in Rome by ending the monarch and distributing power among the people in a complex set of class distinction, magistracies and assemblies.

Question 3c.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average |
| % | 4 | 5 | 28 | 36 | 18 | 9 | 2.8 |

This question specifically asked about the ‘role’ of women in Ancient Rome. The assessment allowed for a fairly broad definition of ‘role’ so it was reasonable for students to discuss the social position of women in addition to the main focus on their roles and responsibilities.

Relevant information reflecting a student’s ‘own knowledge’ included (but was not limited to):

* Women were actively engaged in Roman social life (they attended parties, shows and other public events).
* Women’s primary role was considered to be bearing children.
* Women were involved in businesses, inheriting and controlling land, supervising slaves.
* Women did not participate officially in political life; they could not attend assemblies, vote or hold political office.
* Women married young and could initiate divorce.
* Women had to have a legal male guardian (typically their father or husband).
* Wives often outlived their husbands, and thus may have had influence in the family in a matriarchal role even if there was no legal status to this role.
* Women could be used as political tools in marriages (e.g. Julia and Octavia).
* Specific historical (or legendary) women can be seen as examples of Roman virtue (e.g. Lucretia, Cloelia, Volumnia).
* Women could hold a significant religious role as a Vestal Virgin.

Relevant features of the source included:

* Women are presented in the context of the family (i.e. with men and children, not alone), reflecting that their role and status is defined in relation to others.
* Women are outnumbered by men, suggesting women’s less visible and generally subordinate role in Roman society.
* These women are elite women and do not necessarily reflect the role, status, occupations or presentations of all or even most women in Roman society.

As with the other two civilisations, a common error was to make broad assumptions about women in domestic roles that could have been generically (and stereotypically) applied to any pre-modern civilisation. Some responses discussed women through the lens of men in Rome, for example, by focusing too much on the rights of the paterfamilias; these kinds of points can be useful to emphasise by way of contrast, but should not detract from the point of the question.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

Women in ancient Roman society had an extremely limited political role. They were unable to vote, participate in assemblies or hold civic or military positions. The main role was to provide legitimate heirs for their husband and their activities tended to be within the household, such as preparing meals and spinning wool for cloths. Nevertheless, women in ancient Rome had ‘much greater independence’ than most women at the time (Beard) and were capable of participating in a variety of social activities. For example, as seen in source nine the presence of women in the religious procession alongside men demonstrates that they were able to take part in religious activities of the state. The Vestal Virgins, in particular, held very important roles as the high priestesses of the state temple of Rome. Moreover, women could also attend shows at the theatre and eat at dinner parties alongside men. They also had some degree of economic independence as they could buy and sell property in their own right, make a will and free slaves.

Question 3d.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
| % | 24 | 11 | 17 | 21 | 27 | 2.2 |

Relevant information reflecting a student’s ‘own knowledge’ included (but was not limited to):

* Gaius Marius was a military officer who rose to prominence in the Jugurthine War and became consul for the first time in 107 BCE.
* Marius created a professional army with standardised equipment supplied by the state and regularised training, which resulted in a more efficient army.
* Soldiers carried their own equipment, so the whole army was more mobile.
* Marius developed the cohort as the standard tactical unit in a legion, and improved its fighting ability.
* Citizens were motivated to serve by the offer of land after their term of service; since this required a land bill passed by the Senate, the soldier relied on his general’s political ability for a land settlement.
* A new element – generals backed by their own armies – became a factor in Roman politics and would contribute to the demise of the Republic in later decades.
* Marius was also re-elected consul five more times in consecutive years (from 104 to 100 BCE), foreshadowing the increasing deviation from legal norms that would destabilise the Republic in the following decades.
* When he was unable to persuade the Senate to provide land for his troops in 100 BCE, he used his soldiers to force through his measures; this violence created a new way of manipulating the Roman political system to accomplish the aims of individual politicians.
* His rivalry with Sulla led to civil war (83–82 BCE), again foreshadowing the violence arising from conflict between military men with political ambitions willing to disregard traditional norms.

A common error was that a noticeable number of students confused Gaius Marius for Gaius Gracchus.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

Gaius Marius and his reforms of the Roman military (sometime at the end of the second century BCE) had the most drastic consequences for the republic. To solve the issue of recruitment as Rome was faced with external military threats, Marius enrolled the proletariat into the army when previously only landowners were eligible. This consequently created a dependence on generals to grant their veterans plots of land which ultimately created a patron–client like relationship. This relationship had a significant impact in terms of the Republic’s demise as the loyalty of troops was exploited by generals like Sulla in 88 BCE to establish their own political agendas and in doing so disrupted the values and conventions of the Roman republic.

Question 3e.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | Average |
| % | 19 | 8 | 10 | 15 | 17 | 12 | 9 | 7 | 3 | 3.3 |

The Battle of Actium was clearly a very significant event in the rivalry of the two triumvirs, and many students committed to that line of argument. This was not unreasonable, but unless more context was provided (i.e. what happened before or after the battle), this argument tended to boil down to ‘it was the most significant event because Octavian won and Mark Antony lost’, which was a limited evaluation.

Relevant information reflecting a student’s ‘own knowledge’ included (but was not limited to):

* Success at the Battle of Actium allowed Octavian to secure control over the entire Mediterranean.
* As a result of the Battle of Actium, Mark Antony lost his fleet. Much of his army also deserted immediately afterwards, significantly weakening Antony and Cleopatra’s ability to continue to fight against Octavian.
* He was also able to move his land army through eastern client kingdoms, preventing them from providing Antony with the support he had previously enjoyed from them.
* An outnumbered Antony was nevertheless able to put up a solid defence of Alexandria in July 30 BCE, supported by his battle-hardened veterans.
* However, attrition of Antony’s forces and repeated attacks gave Octavian’s forces the advantage, and they captured the city in August.
* Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide, and it was only then that opposition to Octavian’s rise was really ended.
* Thereafter, Octavian took Egypt as his personal province and consolidated one-man rule in his own person, bringing decades of civil war to and end and beginning a new imperial era for Rome.

Other significant events in the rivalry include:

* The so-called Second Triumvirate was established in 43 BCE; by joining in an alliance, Octavian consolidated his position as heir of Caesar, and open conflict with Antony was delayed (giving Octavian time to gather more allies and reinforce his relationship with the Senate).
* Octavian conducted a ‘propaganda war’, involving the exploitation of Antony’s relationship with Cleopatra and the so-called Donations of Alexandria to make Antony seem anti-Roman.
* Octavian induced the Senate to declare war against Cleopatra, giving Octavian a legitimate reason to attack Antony.

A common error was that some responses rested their argument about the significance of this battle on a more-or-less detailed discussion of what Octavian did afterwards, up to and including the settlements of 27 and 23 BCE. While that would be relevant if the question had asked about the significance of the battle in Octavian’s career, the question was about the rivalry. Thus, information relating to events after Antony’s death were of limited relevance.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

The Battle of Actium was so significant as it ensured that Octavian would become the ‘master of the Roman world’ (Gwynn). Antony’s landing of his fleet and troops at Actium in 31 BCE allowed Octavia to surround him by land and Agrippa to cut him off by sea. Realising that his position was hopeless, Antony feigned an attack on Agrippa‘s fleet, allowing himself, Cleopatra and the Egyptian treasury to escape while leaving the rest of his forces trapped in the bay. Not only did Antony lose most of his fleet but his cowardly abandonment of his men ensured that his force would defect to Octavian and bolstered Octavian’s power. This, and the defection of Antony‘s other troops in Libya, ensured that he could no longer defeat Octavian in the Battle of Alexandria in 30 BCE. Thus the Battle of Actium was the most significant event in the rivalry between Octavian and Antony because it led to Octavian cementing his status is the most powerful man in Rome.

However, Antony‘s relationship with Cleopatra from 37 to 30 BCE was also significant as Octavian was able to use it to draw a ‘damaging picture’ of Antony in the ‘thrall of an eastern Fury’ (Scullard) and thus hurt his reputation. Octavian ensured that Antony‘s relationship with Cleopatra would ‘define’ him in a negative light in the eyes of the Roman republic (Beard). He used their xenophobia to criticise Anthony as a degenerate and his unmanly when he married the foreign Cleopatra in 37 BCE.

Anthony‘s donations of Alexandria in 34 BCE when he gifted various Roman eastern provinces to his children caused outrage in Rome while also sparking fear that Cleopatra would become a queen of Rome and the capital would be moved to Alexandria. Furthermore, Octavian’s reading Antony’s will in the forum in 32 BCE (in which he stated that he wished to be buried in Egypt and left Roman territory to his children) allowed Octavian to gain more popularity in Rome while the Romans’ hatred of Antony increased and the Senate declared Mark Antony as a public enemy of Rome. Octavian was also able to prosecute war more easily against Antony in 31 BCE by presenting it as a fought against a foreign power led by a woman who was ‘dangerous, regal and seductive’ (Beard). Antony‘s relationship with Cleopatra was thus used to Octavia‘s benefit in their rivalry by making him deeply popular in Rome and making Octavian appear as a defender of Roman tradition,

Therefore, while the Battle of Actium was the most significant event in the rivalry between Octavian as it provided Octavian victory, Antony’s relationship with Cleopatra was also significant as Octavian was able to exploit it to destroy Antony’s reputation and boost his own popularity.

Section B

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | Average |
| % | 5 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 11 | 7 | 9 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 10.0 |

In Section B, there was one question per civilisation. Students were required to select one question on which to write an essay.

Some general advice for essay questions is as follows:

* A good essay starts with an effective and economical introduction. In the introduction, students should demonstrate an understanding of the topic (this includes defining any key terms). The introduction should also give an outline of the intended structure of the essay (i.e. a brief snapshot of what each of the body paragraphs will cover). Finally, students should assert a clear contention in the introduction, presenting some opinion about why things happened the way they did.
* It is perfectly acceptable for a contention to be the conventional positions studied at the VCE level; it does not have to represent original research or an understanding of recent developments in academia.
* There is no requirement for essays to follow any particular structure. A three-body paragraph structure is welcome for its familiarity and tends to reflects an organised approach to the topic, but some very good essays in the 2024 Ancient History examination had two or four body paragraphs.
* All four criteria printed on the examination paper for the essay must be met for a high-scoring essay.
* An essay with a clear contention that is consistently developed will tend to present a ‘coherent and relevant historical argument’.
* A ‘demonstration of historical knowledge’ involves the use of specific historical details – names, dates, facts, figures, people, places, statistics. Dates, in particular, should be used more frequently.
* The study design clearly defines ‘historical thinking concepts’ as cause and consequence, continuity and change and/or historical significance. A response demonstrates this well when it goes beyond mere narration of the events and explores how and why things happened and why they were important in the sociohistorical context.
* The use of sources as evidence remains a challenge for students; many essays had no sources. Quotations (from historians or historical figures) are essential evidence for a high-scoring essay. Quotations must be authentic, should not be from textbook authors and must present a meaningful and relevant interpretation to be of value.

Question 1, Egypt

This question asked students to respond to the claim that Nefertiti was the main cause of the crisis in the Amarna Period.

Most students recognised that Nefertiti had an active and influential involvement in Akhenaten’s reign at Amarna (at least based on the material evidence), but that it is difficult to argue she was the main cause of the crisis.

Many high-scoring responses devoted one paragraph to Nefertiti, one paragraph to Amenhotep III and one paragraph to Akhenaten. Some students left Amenhotep III out in favour of a more detailed discussion of Akhenaten, for example, writing one paragraph on his domestic changes and one paragraph on his failures of international diplomacy. While it was reasonable for a student to spend most of the essay arguing that Akhenaten was the main cause of the crisis, some evaluation of Nefertiti’s role was needed.

Relevant information reflecting a student’s ‘own knowledge’ included (but was not limited to):

* Nefertiti was an Egyptian queen and the Great Royal Wife (chief consort) of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten.
* Nefertiti and Akhenaten are commonly depicted before the Aten, demonstrating Nefertiti’s role in the religious life of Amarna. The rays emanating from the Aten end in hands holding the ankh, the symbol of life; these ankhs are always extended toward both the king and queen, not only toward the king.
* Iconographically, Nefertiti was unlike queens before her (who are usually depicted as smaller in stature and standing behind the pharaoh), as she is depicted with her husband as an equal and wearing the attire usually only reserved for a pharaoh.
* Nefertiti’s name was written in double cartouche, a manner used for pharaohs; this symbolises her power as a queen.
* Prayers inscribed on the walls of the temples to the Aten are addressed not only to the king and the Aten, but to the queen as well.
* In the ‘Hwt-Bnbn’ (‘Mansion of the Benben’), a Theban temple dedicated to the Aten, the reliefs on the walls depict only Nefertiti and her daughters, and never even mention the king; in these depictions, the queen performs the duties of a priest while facing an image of herself across an altar.
* Overall, Nefertiti was depicted as Akhenaten’s religious counterpart and maybe even as his political equal.

Other factors to consider included:

* Amenhotep III had recognised the growing power of the priesthood of Amen and had sought to curb it; Akhenaten introduced a new monotheistic cult of sun-worship, focused on the sun’s disc.
* Amenhotep III’s palace at Malkata was originally known as the Palace of the Dazzling Aten, suggesting an increasing interest in solar worship.
* Images of the Aten – a solar disc surmounted by a uraeus and emitting sunrays, each terminating in a caressing hand – begin to appear frequently in royal art, especially on palace and temple walls.
* Akhenaten took worship of the monotheistic Aten to new heights, and did so in ways that directly provoked the priesthood of Amun, leading to a conflict that resulted in the closure of all temples of Amun and the destruction of the Amun priesthood.
* In the fifth year of his reign, Akhenaten relocated the capital to middle Egypt (distancing himself from the court at Thebes and the Amun priesthood).
* Around this time, worship of the traditional gods was banned and a campaign was undertaken to remove their names from monuments.
* A new ‘Amarna style’ art form depicting the Aten, pharaoh and family emerged; this was a significant and sudden break from tradition (these traditions were restored after Akhenaten’s death).
* The Amarna Letters suggest that Akhenaten did not maintain his relationships with neighbouring kingdoms (for example, he failed to provide military support when requested).

The main recurring weakness of lower-scoring essays was that they did not establish what is meant by the ‘Amarna crisis’. Without defining this context, many essays were really about what the royals did at Amarna rather than how these royals caused a crisis. Some essays showed a detailed understanding of limited aspects of the Amarna period (e.g. thorough discussion of changes in art style or architectural features at Akhetaten) but did not link this to either Nefertiti or the concept of a ‘crisis’.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

The Amarna period saw the most intense of radical change in New Kingdom Egypt. Although Nefertiti played a role in the crisis of the Amana period it was others that played a more significant, Amenhotep III and, especially, Akhenaten through their introduction of the Aten and the opposition to traditional religious and political life.

Nefertiti unorthodox role as both the wife of the pharaoh but apparently his equal partner suggests she played a significant part in the changing role of the royal couple. In this way, she contributed to causing dramatic changes in well-established traditions of Egypt. Such an emphasis on the royal couple, as shown in the House Altar piece or reliefs of the Window of Appearances, put Nefertiti and Akhenaten at the centre of an exclusive cult worship connected to the Aten that was inaccessible to all but the highest echelon of society. Because of Nefertiti‘s great prestige some scholars even speculate on her role as co-regent and thus she would have played a major role in the crisis of the Amarna period. These changes to tradition contributed to instability during Akhenaten’s rule, presenting him as a weaker pharaoh by getting the queen to carry out the king’s tasks. Talatats at Amarna confirm Nefertiti‘s ability to ‘abandon the traditional role of the queen as passive observer’ (Stevenson), with talatats depicting Nefertiti smiting her enemies and holding them by the hair in the manner of a pharaoh. By being presented in the manner of a pharaoh and Akhenaten’s absence from military activity, the king’s reputation was undermined, creating uncertainty in the people and adding to the crisis of the Amarna period.

Amenhotep III began the shift in focus from the Amun and ‘pantheon of gods’ (Bradley) to the Aten and the pharaoh, setting in motion the crisis of the period. Amenhotep III paved the way for Akhenaten, building a temple to the Aten, creating the House of the Dazzling Sun Disc and shifting the focus from the previous state god Amun. Amenhotep III’s intimidation of the cult of Amun was clear with him in his extensive building program and by moving funding and tribute away from cult of Amun. Their power was further weakened by disbanding the priesthoods of Amun and shutting the temples, establishing the conditions for the crisis. The deification of Amenhotep showed Akhenaten that he could achieve ascendancy by presenting himself in a divine triad (along with Nefertiti and the Aten) replacing Nut, Khonsu and Amun. Thus, Amenhotep III created precedents that Akhenaten followed.

Akhenaten was the main contributor to the Amarna crisis. Through his close relationship with the Aten, Akhenaten was worshipped as a god (or at least closely associated with the monotheistic religion) but this came at a cost, causing crisis in Egypt. In the Southern Tomb Cemetery in Akhetaten excavations show that 65% of the population suffered from an accumulation of stress fractures from carrying heavy loads, early deaths and malnourishment. Alongside this neglect and possible famine of the population is evidence showing that much food went to the Aten as offerings. Life in Amana was ‘not the paradise in the desert that Akhenaten wanted everyone so much to believe it to be’ (Kemp). Furthermore, the crisis of the period is demonstrated by Akhenaten’s withdrawal from foreign affairs shown in the Amarna letters which state that ‘Hittite troops have set the country on fire but my Lord has done nothing to them’, suggesting Akhenaten did not intervene in the military conflict of his allies even when requested to and in the Boundary Stele he declares ‘I will not go outside these walls’. This isolation may have undermined the scope of Egypt’s influence in international matters.

Akhenaten’s actions destabilised the government, religion and traditions of Egypt and thus he was ultimately the main contributor to the Amarna crisis although Amenhotep and Nefertiti were influence before and during the crisis period.

Question 2, Greece

This question asked students to respond to the claim that the actions of Alcibiades had a significant impact on the outcome of the Decelean War.

The few students who chose this topic recognised that Alcibiades was a factor in the Decelean War, but they did not always make a clear judgement about whether he helped or hindered Athens, or consider other relevant factors.

Relevant information reflecting a student’s ‘own knowledge’ included (but was not limited to):

* The charismatic politician Alcibiades had been active in the collapse of the fragile Peace of Nicias by supporting Argos against Sparta; this led to the Battle of Mantinea in 418 BCE.
* His ‘hawkish’ policies continued in Athenian action against Melos in 416 BCE and then the Sicilian Expedition (415–412 BCE).
* Alcibiades’ defection to Sparta in 415 BCE after being recalled undermined the expedition, leading to its disastrous defeat in 413 BCE and the subsequent consequences to Athens – loss of fleet and manpower and the cost of regrouping.
* Alcibiades also provided Spartans with strategic advice to defeat Athens after the outbreak of the Decelean War in 413 BCE, including the occupation of Decelea blocking Athenian access to land, food and silver, and diplomatic missions to Chios and other Aegean islands to persuade them to defect to Sparta.
* A bitter rivalry with the Spartan king Agis led to his ‘redefection’ to Athens.
* This led to some successes for Athens with his election as strategos in 408 BCE and the naval victories such as Cyzicus, Chalcedon and Byzantion, and his role in the fall of the Four Hundred tyranny in Athens.
* However, the Athenians’ botched military campaign at Notium and Cymae (406 BCE) led to Alcibiades losing the command and fleeing to Thrace.

Other factors to consider included:

* the political situation in Athens (oligarchic revolt), indecision, internal arrogance leading to rejection of peace offer after disaster at Cyzicus and the actions of politicians like Cleophon who had refused peace settlements
* Athens’ financial situation after decades of war
* Sparta’s growing strength
* the alliance with Persia after 407 BCE
* the role of Lysander in Alcibiades’ final actions, as well as his naval success
* the impact of the Athenian defeat at Arginusae in 406 BCE and then Aegospotami in 405 BCE, and the blockade of Athens by Sparta in 404 BCE.

Some responses demonstrated that the student did not know what ‘Decelean (Ionian) War’ meant – they either conflated it with the Peloponnesian War generally or even with the Ionian Revolt. Many students wrote a lot about Alcibiades’ life before and during the Sicilian Expedition, but that event was the prelude to the Decelean War. While some background is relevant, the question was about the outcome of the Decelean War, so the focus should be on the period 413–404 BCE.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

The actions of Alcibiades were a hugely significance on the outcome of the Decelean War. However, there were other events that also contributed to the Decelean War (413 to 404 BCE) which was the last part of the Peloponnesian War (431 to 404 BCE) which saw the two leagues, Delian and Peloponnesian, fighting each other for victory. Alcibiades’ actions contributed to creating circumstances that led to the Spartan victory. However, the actions of Lysander in this war also enabled Sparta to gain victory over Athens while the Athenian Assembly itself created worse conditions for Athens.

Alcibiades was an Athenian statesman, described as ‘brass’ by Martin, whose defection to Sparta during the Sicilian Expedition greatly strengthened Sparta and helped it to victory in the war. At Sparta, Alcibiades persuaded the Gerousia and Assembly to send aid to Syracuse in 413 BCE. This led to the Syracusans’ victory over the Athenian forces. This loss scores great strain on the Athenian treasury as they had heavily invested in the expedition, believing they would gain victory. Thucydides notes that the fleet Athens sent to Sicily was ‘the finest and most costly Hellenic troops’. Alcibiades also persuaded Sparta to fortify Decelea in 413 BCE. This enabled the Spartans to cut off the Athenian land route to Euboea (of source of grain and cattle) thus causing Athens to rely on its sea routes to get its supplies. Decelea was also close to the silver mines at Larium which enabled Athenian slaves working there to escape and find refuge. Around 20,000 slaves escaped within a year. With less silver being mined, Athens lost a crucial source of its income, thus further increasing the economic strain on Athens. Furthermore, thanks to Alcibiades’ advice, Sparta could use Decelea as a base to do more frequent raids into Attica. This caused Athens to have to focus some of its troops in protecting Athens by land. Alcibiades also further weakened Athenian politics in 411 by supporting the oligarch revolt at Athens, temporarily but significantly destabilising Athens, thus helping Sparta to a victorious outcome in the Decelean War.

Moreover, Lysander actions as navarch of Sparta also enabled Sparta to gain victory in the Decelean War. Lysander moved the Peloponnesian naval base from Miletus to Ephesus, allowing them to bypass the Athenian fleet at Samos and move about the Aegean more freely. Lysander also studied the tactics of the battle of Cyzicus in 410 BC and then he trained his sailors accordingly which better enabled them to face the experience Athenian navy. Lysander also gained an alliance with the Persian satrap, Cyrus the Younger, who provided Sparta with funding. This enabled them to increase sailors’ pay from three to four obols per day. As Plutarch noted, this action enabled the Spartans to ‘empty out the Athenian ships’ and gain experienced sailors. Through this action, Lysander was able to be ‘innovative and strategic’ (Bradley) and gain victories at Notium (406 BCE) and Aegospotami (405 BCE). After the victory at Aegospotami, then Spartans were able to besiege Athens by sea while the Sparta king Agis attacked by land. This forced the Athenians to surrender in 401 BCE, bringing the Decelean War to an end.

Furthermore the decisions of the Athenian assembly also caused problems for Athens. Bradley notes these ‘internal struggles’ ultimately caused Athens to lose the war. Arginusae (406 BCE) were victorious against Sparta after their loss at Notium. However, the night of the victory, the generals decided not to rescue their fellow sailors due to storm. The angry Athenian assembly decided to execute six of the eight generals of this battle. This decision weakened the power of the Athenian navy and prompted the new generals to be cautious in their decisions. This loss of experience caused Athens to lose the decisive battle of Aegospotami in 405 BCE and made the outcome of the Decelean War a more likely victory for Sparta.

Although Alcibiades’ actions disadvantaged Athens they alone were not responsible for the outcome of the Decelean War. The actions of Lysander and the Athenian democracy itself created conditions beneficial to Sparta which ultimately enabled Sparta to win the war.

Question 3, Rome

This question asked students to respond to the claim that the actions of Sulla led to the downfall of the Roman Republic.

This was the most commonly selected question. High-scoring responses began by recognising that Sulla was only one of a series of individuals who contributed to the downfall of the Republic; he both followed existing precedent and perpetuated the political trends that were emerging. These responses examined Sulla’s specific actions in the context of late Republican political, economic and social forces and then considered the role of others (typically some combination of the Gracchi, Marius, Caesar, Pompey, Antony and Octavian).

Some responses focused exclusively on Sulla, and these could be high-scoring if they included a genuinely comprehensive and detailed account of his actions along with a critical discussion of how this contributed to change in Rome.

Very few responses examined what is meant by the ‘downfall of the Roman Republic’. The disruptions to the traditional Roman political system were implicitly equated with downfall. Only the very best responses observed that from the Roman perspective, there was still very much a republic, even if by 23 BCE it had been dominated by Augustus.

Relevant information reflecting a student’s ‘own knowledge’ included (but was not limited to):

* Sulla began his career under Marius in the war against Jugurtha, but his first significant challenges to the status quo, which also set a precedent, were his marches on Rome in 88 and 82 BCE.
* In 88 BCE, his purpose was to reclaim control of Rome and the command of the Mithridatic war, after Marius contrived to have him removed.
* In 83–2 BCE, he returned to Italy with 40 000 men. All resistance was quelled at the last, decisive, bloody battle at the Porta Collina in 82 BCE.
* Force supported by violence had become a consistent component of Roman domestic politics.
* Sulla’s revenge on his enemies was brutal and, according to Appian and Plutarch, the Roman government became a tyranny.
* The proscriptions continued until June 81 BCE, killing thousands of political opponents.
* The proscriptions eliminated political enemies, and the confiscation of estates enabled Sulla to repay debts and resettle 120 000 veterans in colonies across Italy.
* Sulla also increased his client base through freeing many slaves.
* In 82 BCE, Sulla secured his power by appointing himself the historical office of ‘dictator’, focusing power in a single individual for the first time since the regal period.
* In this period, Sulla tried to simultaneously reinforce tradition (enlarging the Senate, enforcing the cursus honorum, reforming the law courts) while also undermining it (limiting the role of the tribunes, relying on military power).
* The Senate was doubled to 600 members.
* The Senate now had to approve legislation before it was presented to the Assembly.
* The number of quaestors and praetors were increased to 20 and eight respectively. This ensured a supply of personnel to fill offices and maintain the Senate with future members, as ex-magistrates had life membership in the Senate.
* Sulla codified the cursus honorum, which was being abused.
* He restricted the tribune’s power of veto, thereby stifling their authority, requiring any bills they proposed to be approved by the Senate and barring ex-tribunes from accessing other magistracies.
* In 81 or 80 BCE, he abdicated the position of dictator and then retired from public life.
* Measures such as political violence, political modifications, relationship with armed forces, rivalries and proscriptions can be compared with the actions and careers of the Gracchi, Marius, Caesar, Pompey, Antony, Octavian/Augustus.

Lower-scoring responses typically either included short and general comments on some of the highlights of Sulla’s careers (marching on Rome, proscriptions) or glossed over Sulla in favour of discussing one or more of the other prominent individuals.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response:

The actions Sulla contributed the downfall of the Roman Republic to notable extent. While his actions set a precedent for acquiring power through violence, the traditional strength of the republic had already been worn down before Sulla’s rise to power and would continue to be worn down by powerful individuals following his death in 78.

Sulla’s actions of using his private army in 88 and 82 to force the Senate to cooperate and his introduction of proscriptions eroded the republic. Through using violence as a mean to gain power after losing command of the Mithridates campaign to Gaius Marius, Sulla used his private army, ‘entering Rome under arms’ (Beard) in order to force the Senate to put him in charge of the campaign once more. He used this method again in 82, marching on Rome and forcing the Senate to make him dictator, acquiring power by force rather than rising through the traditional cursus honorum and thereby undermining traditional Republican ideals. Sulla further proved that the state was no longer governed by the law but ‘by the sword’ (Cicero) by introducing proscriptions in 82 as a means of eliminating his rivals. Hundreds of Sulla’s opponents were killed in this way, further eroding the traditions of the republic and ‘violence was increasingly being taken for granted as a political tool’ (Beard).

The traditions of the Republic had already been worn down, however, before Sulla’s rule, through individuals such as the Gracchi brothers and Gaius Marius, although Sulla’s absolute power was unprecedented compared to them. The contravening of the traditional republic system was demonstrated by Tiberius Gracchus who took his legislation directly to the Plebeian Council rather than the Senate (133), setting the example for his brother Gaius to do the same in 123. These contraventions were the first steps in the ‘collapse of the republic’ (Cassius Dio) which continued to be broken down by Gaius Marius who held the position of consul seven times throughout his life starting in 107. Gaius Marius demonstrated the decaying nature of the Senate’s authority by holding consecutive office before Sulla had risen into power. Therefore, the Roman Republic already began to erode before Sulla due to powerful individuals who contravened the ways of the republic.

Ultimately Sulla’s actions were not the cause of the downfall of the republic but rather acted as a catalyst for its demise through the precedents he set. His example of marching on Rome in 88 and 82 paved the way for the rise of imperial power through the rise of Caesar who also acquired power by marching on Rome in 49 and eliminating his rival Pompy Magnus through violence in the Battle of Pharsalus (48). Caesar also demanded absolute power and was made dictator for life in 44. Furthermore, this example of violence continued to influence the leaders after Sulla’s retirement in 80, demonstrated by the Second Triumvirate’s (43 to 33) re-introduction of proscription, mirroring Sulla’s method of eliminating rivals. The ultimate victory by Octavian was achieved through a radical restructuring of power around himself, creating a one-man rule that still retain the appearance of republican traditions. Thus Republic followed a long process of decline in which Sulla’s violent actions acted as a catalyst for others to undermine the republic and contribute towards its demise.

Sulla’s actions led to the downfall of the republic to a limited extent. While the republic had ‘been long sick’ (Cicero) due to previous contraventions of tradition, by manipulating the Senate through the threat of violence he paved the way for powerful individuals to acquire power by the same means proving that ‘the law is powerless’ (Livy) in the face of militaristic violence and ambition, undermining the republic Vallas and causing its downfall.