

Mark Scheme with Examiners' Report GCE A Level Ancient History (9278)

June 2005

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ANCIENT HISTORY 9278, MARK SCHEME WITH CHIEF EXAMINER'S COMMENTS

General Comments

Overall there was a very encouraging response to this year's papers. The significant increase in candidate numbers saw no fall in the standard of scripts. Many candidates produced answers to questions on both papers which clearly demonstrated their application, diligence and understanding.

Paper 1: Greek History - Outlines

Some questions on this paper proved a very great deal more popular than others. Some questions, however, produced very few answers.

There were virtually no answers to the question on Dionysius I and II. A few candidates attempted the question on Philip of Macedon but none with any real confidence. Perhaps surprisingly, not many more candidates attempted the evaluation of Alexander as a military commander but those who did were generally confident in their response.

Question 13 gave a choice between an analysis of hoplite warfare and an analysis of naval warfare. Only a few candidates took up this challenge but some wrote quite convincingly. The choice in Question 14 was between a very structured question which required a description of a typical Greek polis in some detail, and a much more open-ended question on Greek religion. Few candidates attempted the former though some who did made sensible use of the structured guidelines. Rather more attempted the question on religion and some good full answers were produced but also those which lacked any real depth or detail.

The very great majority of answers were to the other questions, all of which were attempted across the whole ability range.

Question 1

The substantive part of this question required a clear, full and fairly detailed description of Cimon's career, not just down to his ostracism but down to his death. For good marks, there had to be an attempt to answer the second evaluative part of the question. Which side the candidate comes down on does not matter: credit is given for quality of the evaluative argument.

Many candidates demonstrated a full and detailed knowledge of Cimon for this question and the better ones were able to make sensible and persuasive analysis of whether best use was made of his talents.

Question 2

This was quite a precise question within a tight chronological frame. Candidates thus needed to be focused and not stray outside this except briefly for comparative purposes. The second, evaluative part of the question had to be addressed for good marks.

In response to this question, most candidates gave a more or less full narrative account of the events that decade. The better ones were able to relate their answer more specifically to the requirements of the question. Very few made much of the final point of the question concerning the reasons for failure.

Question 3

This was a very broad and open question which invited the candidate to draw from their overall knowledge of the fifth century such factors and such evidence as they deem necessary to fashion their thesis. For a good answer there had to be some clear use of relevant primary evidence.

This question was popular and was generally well done with, in most cases, a real effort to focus on possible benefits rather than just a narrative description.

Question 4

This question had quite a range of possible responses and there was no one 'right answer'. The candidate was invited to build a case and see it through to a valid conclusion so that more or less diametrically-opposed views could both score very highly, provided the cases for them were well put and well supported.

This question produced some very good answers and many candidates really warmed to this. There being no 'right answer', candidates could and did stand or fall by the choice of their evidence and the quality of their argument.

Question 5

This question required a selective analysis of Spartan activity and policy over a long period together with an evaluation of whether they count as having failed and if so, why. It had the potential for quite a subtle approach in that the best candidates could be expected to see the need to judge the Spartans by other than conventional criteria.

This question produced a wide range of responses with some candidates warming to the material and demonstrating a flair for the broader approach.

Question 6

This required an attempt to place the expedition in a wider historical context and not a description of its details. The second part of the question invited the candidate to consider how far the survival of an author's account can affect the status of a historical event.

Fewer candidates attempted question 6 but those who did usually did quite well. This was unlikely to have tempted those who had not revised the subject.

Question 7

The main requirement was a narrative account of Athens' recovery after her comprehensive defeat in 404 BC but for good marks, there had to be an attempt to evaluate the Spartan attitude to it all.

Like the previous question, this was answered by fewer candidates and nearly always those who had clearly included this in their study and revision.

Question 8

A very specific comparison question which required a selection of factors about the two tyrants, leading to a view on their respective success or failure.

Question 9

The candidate was invited to assess the Spartan system as a whole and in such detail as they deemed appropriate. The defeat at Leuctra simply provided a focus on alleged failure and should not itself have been the main feature of the answer. As ever the quality of the argument mattered far more than the actual conclusion.

Few candidates answered this question. Some simply gave narrative description of parts of the Spartan system; a few went some way beyond that and rose to the analytical challenge in the question.

Question 10

This question clearly and unequivocally focused on the fourth century and so democratic developments in the fifth century should largely have been ignored, except occasionally for the purposes of comparison. This question required a detailed survey of democratic changes over the fourth century and an assessment of Athenian democracy by the end.

This produced a surprising level of confusion in many of the candidates who attempted it. Despite the repetition of 'fourth century' within the working of the question, many candidates simply devoted their answer to developments within the fifth century - with obvious consequences.

Question 11

A candidate could simply have given a clear detailed narrative account of what Philip achieved, but for a good mark there was a clear requirement to do so in the context of comparing Philip with those who sought to oppose him, or even those who did not seek to oppose him but subsequently wished that they had.

Question 12

This was a very direct request for analysis of Alexander's talent as a military commander. No particular number of battles is mentioned so some candidates may have preferred breadth and others depth of approach.

Question 13 (a) and (b)

Both parts were very similar in approach and simply referred to different aspects of warfare. Both required some specific examples.

Question 14

(a) This was a particularly structured question so the candidate was left in no doubt as to what was required. Accurate detailed knowledge rather than any evaluation was the key to this question.

(b) By contrast, this was a very open and broad question which turned upon evaluation. It did not just require an account of the deities but rather an assessment of how important those deities were to the Greeks. The candidate was left free to focus on an ordinary individual Greek or on Greek society as a whole.

Paper 2: Herodotus and the Persian Wars

Questions 1 (a) - (e): extracts from Herodotus

Each question required precise, clear, factually correct or effectively interpreted responses. The candidate needed to focus on what is actually there in the passage chosen, but be prepared to go beyond this as appropriate. The mark allocation for each subsection gives a guide to the scale of response required.

As in previous years, these questions were generally answered well with many candidates demonstrating a good, detailed knowledge and thus scoring deservedly high marks. All five sections were answered, with part (e), on Lampon, being the least popular.

Generally candidates need to get a better feel for what is an appropriate length for their answer. All too often good candidates wrote substantially more than was necessary which did no harm to their marks in this section but must have taken up time which could have been devoted to the essays.

Essay questions

This year there was a very even spread of responses with all questions being answered by a reasonable number of candidates.

Question 2 on Herodotus as a historian produced few good answers as candidates tended to limit themselves to a description of his account of Marathon without much, if any, analysis of what this shows about his quality as a historian.

All the other questions produced many good and some very good answers. Question 9 sometimes produced answers which rather ran out of steam or time, having addressed one or two parts of a three-part question on dangers to the Greek cause.

Question 10 on Herodotus' philosophy of history was generally done only by candidates who had the confidence and ability to do a reasonable job with it.

Overall, this year's candidates can feel pleased with the way they responded to this paper.

Question 2

Candidates had to focus on Herodotus' strengths and weaknesses and not on the narrative detail or historical context of Marathon except insofar as it is relevant to this objective.

Question 3

This was a three-part question and for good marks, there had to be attention given to leadership and objectives of those compared, plus the degree to which Herodotus is perceived as showing any bias.

Question 4

This required an analysis of the Greeks' initial response to Xerxes' invasion. Exactly what line a candidate took mattered far less than the quality of their argument and evidence.

Question 5

This required both details of the strategic decisions taken by both sides after Salamis and some more comparative evaluation. An account of the battle itself was not relevant.

Question 6

This question was quite specialised with a specific focus on analysis of Greek naval competence and resources in 480 - 479. Much will depend on Artemisium and Salamis but there is more to it than that.

Question 7

This focused specifically on Themistocles and while the question referred to his reputation after Salamis, it was relevant to show some of what he did leading up to that point. Good evidence scored highly.

Question 8

A slightly unusual angle, this question required no real evaluation, rather detailed factual knowledge of a specific subject.

Question 9

Candidates had to attempt all three aspects of this question in order to score highly. They did not need to devote equal space to each. Specific examples were required and evaluation underpinned the whole approach.

Question 10

This question really required comment on Herodotus' philosophy of history and not an account of any particular historical figure. Individual examples were necessary to make a case but the emphasis throughout had to be on Herodotus.

GRADE BOUNDARIES

Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Lowest mark for award of grade	67	59	52	45	38

Note: Grade boundaries may vary from year to year and from subject to subject, depending on the demands of the question paper.

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