

Examiners' Report Summer 2007

GCE

Ancient History (9278 Papers 1 & 2)

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General

The overall standard was encouraging with a good proportion of the candidates demonstrating both ability and interest. In the case of paper one there was, as usual, evidence of a clear preference for the questions on fifth rather than the fourth century topics. That said, there seemed a slightly more broadly based take up of the questions from paper one with only question 8 (on the Chalcidic Confederacy) having no takers. In the case of paper two there was a very even distribution of responses both within the five subsections of question 1 and among the essay questions (2-10).

There were many good full, clear and relevant responses to an encouragingly high overall standard. Some candidates, however, still failed to grasp the fundamental importance of relevance and all too often included material in the answer, however good, in general terms, did them no good because it was not relevant to the question set. The importance of having the discipline to leave out such material can not be overstated.

Some candidates fell foul of the downward spiral that comes from changing question part way through their answer. All instances of this must be to the candidates' disadvantage. A few cases were extreme. One candidate wrote two sides crossed it all out then went on to answer, not a different question but the same one again.

A small number of candidates wrote responses that they must surely have realised fell well short of even reaching 'A' Level standard. Some time, prior to the examinations, spent on exam technique as well as on the actual history ought to help some of these weaknesses.

9278-01

There were at least some attempts at all questions except for question 8 (Chalcidic Confederacy). Some questions prompted candidates of insufficient discipline simply to put down everything they knew rather than answer the question set. This was especially the case with question 4 (Golden Age) which produced some long essays all about Pericles but only parts of which actually addressed the question. Some questions clearly invite both narrative and evaluation but not all candidates took this on board. Question 2 (Pausanias/Themistocles) prompted factual narrative about the two characters with no attempt to answer the 'why' part of the question. Some candidates saw question 5 (Archidamian War) as a chance to demonstrate their knowledge of the causes of the Peloponnesian War. Question 6 (Nicias) was generally done well by those who attempted it. Question 11 (Demosthenes) was only attempted by a few candidates several of whom seemed totally confused and rooted their answers in the wrong century. The social and cultural questions produced quite a number of answers right across the whole quality range.

9278-02

Overall this paper produced a more evenly spread take up than for many years. All parts of question 1 were attempted and the standard of response was generally high or very high. There were, however, still some candidates who did not seem to realise the inherent correlation between marks and scale of response and who wrote a paragraph to earn a single mark or wrote a sentence when trying for 4 or 5 marks. Failure to pay close attention to the wording cost some candidates marks eg question 1cii refers to the 'Persian army and navy' but some only dealt with the former in their answer. A few candidates produced answers to more than two parts of question 1 contrary to the rubric, while a few made no attempt at question 1 at all.

There were some good answers to all the essay questions, even those which might seem less immediately attractive such as question 7 (female characters) or question 9 (Xerxes reputation). Too many of those who attempted question 1 (Marathon) saw it as a chance to show their knowledge of the Marathon campaign without addressing the issue of Herodotus' quality as a source. Question 6 (fleets) produced some very general answers without much real substance, and question 7 (female characters) produced too many answers that were one dimensional in being limited only to Artemis. There were some lively and interesting answers to question 10 (Herodotus' digressions) with some good personal responses to Herodotus' work.

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