



NSW Education Standards Authority

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Centre Number

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Student Number

2025 HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

Ancient History

General Instructions

- Reading time – 5 minutes
- Working time – 3 hours
- Write using black pen
- A Source Booklet is provided with this paper
- Write your Centre Number and Student Number at the top of this page

Total marks: **Section I – 25 marks** (pages 2–8)
100

- Attempt Questions 1–4
- Allow about 45 minutes for this section

Section II – 25 marks (pages 9–13)

- Attempt ONE question from Questions 5–12
- Allow about 45 minutes for this section

Section III – 25 marks (pages 14–16)

- Attempt ONE question from Questions 13–22
- Allow about 45 minutes for this section

Section IV – 25 marks (pages 17–20)

- Attempt ONE question from Questions 23–32
- Allow about 45 minutes for this section

Section I — Cities of Vesuvius – Pompeii and Herculaneum

25 marks

Attempt Questions 1–4

Allow about 45 minutes for this section

Refer to the Source Booklet to answer Questions 2–4.

Answer the questions in the spaces provided. These spaces provide guidance for the expected length of response.

Extra writing space is provided on pages 7–8 of this booklet. If you use this space, clearly indicate which question you are answering.

Your answer will be assessed on how well you:

- demonstrate historical knowledge and understanding relevant to the question
 - communicate ideas and information logically
 - use historical terms and concepts appropriately
-

Question 1 (3 marks)

Outline the main features of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79.

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Do NOT write in this area.

Section I extra writing space

If you use this space, clearly indicate which question you are answering.

Do NOT write in this area.

Ancient History

Section II — Ancient Societies

25 marks

Attempt ONE question from Questions 5–12

Answer ALL parts of the question

Allow about 45 minutes for this section

Answer the question on pages 2–8 of the Sections II, III and IV Writing Booklet. Extra writing booklets are available.

Your answer will be assessed on how well you:

- demonstrate historical knowledge and understanding relevant to the question
 - communicate ideas and information logically
 - use historical terms and concepts appropriately
-

Question 5 — Option A: New Kingdom Egypt society to the death of Amenhotep III (25 marks)

- (a) Outline the concept of *maat* in Egypt during this period. **4**
- (b) Explain the role and status of scribes in Egypt during this period. **6**
- (c) Assess the significance of Egyptian beliefs and practices regarding death during this period. Support your answer with reference to the following interpretation and other relevant sources. **15**

Another old cliché – the idea that Egyptians were totally obsessed with death – is in danger of being eclipsed by a new cliché, since many recent books have made the point that Egyptian tombs contain ample evidence that they were actually obsessed with life, in the form of endless ‘daily life’ scenes and models, depicting individuals working in the fields, making wine, banqueting, playing music, dancing, and numerous other life-affirming activities.

IAN SHAW
Ancient Egypt: A Very Short Introduction, 2021

Oxford University Press, 2021.
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Question 6 — Option B: New Kingdom Egypt society during the Ramesside period (25 marks)

- (a) Outline the concept of *maat* in Egypt during this period. **4**
- (b) Explain what tomb robberies during this period reveal about society in Ramesside Egypt. **6**
- (c) Assess the impact of the pharaoh on Egyptian society during this period. Support your answer with reference to the following interpretation and other relevant sources. **15**

The monarchy exercised a tremendous influence on all areas of Egyptian culture, dictating the styles of art, architecture and literature that dominate in the surviving record. The nature of royal power and the true extent of its political influence are important questions that go to the heart of Egyptian civilization.

TOBY WILKINSON

The Egyptian World, 2007

Taylor and Francis Publishers, 2007

Permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Centre

Question 7 — Option C: Society in Israel from Solomon to the fall of Samaria (25 marks)

- (a) Outline the role of the army in Israel during this period. **4**
- (b) Explain the roles of the Jerusalem temple and priests in opposition to Israel during this period. **6**
- (c) Assess the success of the economy of Israel during this period. Support your answer with reference to the following interpretation and other relevant sources. **15**

The economic base of both city and village was agriculture and small handcraft industries. Yet the economy of the cities incorporated other components as well, such as income from trade and from services rendered to the central government. Any ruler would have been hard-pressed to satisfy both of these diverse groups.*

JAMES MILLER and JOHN HAYES

A History of Ancient Israel and Judah, 2006

© Westminster John Knox Press

* rendered *provided*

Question 8 — Option D: Persian society at the time of Darius and Xerxes
(25 marks)

- (a) Outline the role of the *hazarapatis* in Persia during this period. **4**
- (b) Explain what funerary customs and tombs reveal about Persian royalty during this period. **6**
- (c) Assess the role of women in Persia during this period. Support your answer with reference to the following interpretation and other relevant sources. **15**

... royal women acted within a clearly defined spectrum of activities within which they enjoyed economic independence, being involved in the administration of economic affairs, and engaging the same officials as the king. Their ability to travel, the travel rations, the variety of places at which their estates were documented, and the manpower they controlled requires us to recognize the organization and structure that lies behind such a division of wealth.

MARIA BROSIUS

Women in Ancient Persia (559–331 BC), 1996

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Question 9 — Option E: Society in China during the Han Dynasty
206 BC – AD 220 (25 marks)

- (a) Outline the main features of transport in China during this period. **4**
- (b) Explain the religious role of the emperor during this period. **6**
- (c) Assess the importance of Han social structure during this period. Support your answer with reference to the following interpretation and other relevant sources. **15**

The Han society can be described as a typical rank society with its elite population divided into twenty ranks that enjoyed different degrees of privilege. The long process of expansion afforded tremendous opportunities for the young people of the empire to win military or civil merits and hence join the ranks of social elites. The rank system provided the basic social order of Han society which was enforced through the Han legal system.

LI FENG

Early China: A Social and Cultural History, 2014

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Question 10 — Option F: Bronze Age – Minoan Crete (25 marks)

- (a) Outline the main features of palace complexes in Crete during this period. **4**
- (b) Explain the nature and identities of deities in Minoan Crete during this period. **6**
- (c) Assess the features of the economy of Minoan Crete. Support your answer with reference to the following interpretation and other relevant sources. **15**

This wondrous world of wealth in the leading sector of Cretan Bronze Age societies is not representative of society as a whole. The picture of a benevolent aristocracy redistributing its wealth to the lower classes is questionable... Some households produced and traded in basic necessities, probably at local markets, contrary to the belief that all economic activities were regulated by the central authority.*

KOSTIS CHRISTAKIS
'Minoan Society and Culture'
The Encyclopedia of Ancient History, 2012

© DOI Foundation

* benevolent *kind and generous*

**Question 11 — Option G: Spartan society to the Battle of Leuctra 371 BC
(25 marks)**

- (a) Outline the role of the *ekklesia* in Sparta during this period. **4**
- (b) Explain how the Spartans controlled the helots. **6**
- (c) Assess the importance of education and training in Spartan society during this period. Support your answer with reference to the following interpretation and other relevant sources. **15**

Of all Greek cities, Sparta is surely the one where education played the greatest role, because the model of the citizen was particularly demanding and exerted a very strong pressure on individuals; in particular, one of its principal missions was to make them as far as possible the same, which implied that the process should be identical for all. Education is, therefore, at the heart of Spartan ideology and practice.

JEAN DUCAT
'Perspectives on Spartan Education in the Classical Period'
Sparta: New Perspectives, 2009

© Classical Press of Wales

Question 12 — Option H: Athenian society in the time of Pericles (25 marks)

- (a) Outline the role of the *boule* in Athens during this period. **4**
- (b) Explain the impact of the Athenian empire on the economy of Athens during this period. **6**
- (c) Assess the importance of Athenian cultural life during this period. Support your answer with reference to the following interpretation and other relevant sources. **15**

... the prosperity and cultural achievements of Athens in the mid-fifth century B.C. have led to this period being called a Golden Age in the city-state history ... As the Ionic frieze on the Parthenon revealed so dramatically, the Athenians in the mid-fifth century B.C. believed they enjoyed the favor of the gods and were willing ... to erect beautiful and massive monuments in honor of the deities protecting them.

THOMAS MARTIN
Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times, 2000

Reproduced with permission of the Licensor through PLSclear

Section III — Personalities in their Times

25 marks

Attempt ONE question from Questions 13–22

Answer ALL parts of the question

Allow about 45 minutes for this section

Answer the question on pages 10–16 of the Sections II, III and IV Writing Booklet. Extra writing booklets are available.

Your answer will be assessed on how well you:

- demonstrate historical knowledge and understanding relevant to the question
 - communicate ideas and information logically
 - use historical terms and concepts appropriately
-

Question 13 — Option A: Egypt – Hatshepsut (25 marks)

- (a) Describe Hatshepsut’s promotion of cults other than the cult of Amun. **4**
- (b) Explain the significance of ONE event in the career of Hatshepsut. **6**
- (c) Account for the changing titles and images of Hatshepsut. **15**

Question 14 — Option B: Egypt – Akhenaten (25 marks)

- (a) Describe artistic representations of the natural world during the reign of Akhenaten. **4**
- (b) Explain the significance of ONE event in the career of Akhenaten. **6**
- (c) Account for the changing titles and images of Akhenaten. **15**

Question 15 — Option C: The Near East – Sennacherib (25 marks)

- (a) Describe the Assyrian concept of kingship. **4**
- (b) Explain the significance of ONE event in the career of Sennacherib. **6**
- (c) Discuss the manner and impact of the death of Sennacherib. **15**

Question 16 — Option D: The Near East – Xerxes (25 marks)

- (a) Describe the Persian concept of kingship. **4**
- (b) Explain the significance of ONE event in the career of Xerxes. **6**
- (c) Discuss the manner and impact of the death of Xerxes. **15**

Question 17 — Option E: China – Qin Shihuangdi (25 marks)

- (a) Describe the importance of the tomb of Qin Shihuangdi. **4**
- (b) Explain the significance of ONE event in the career of Qin Shihuangdi. **6**
- (c) Discuss the nature of the relationship between Qin Shihuangdi and court officials. **15**

Question 18 — Option F: Greece – Pericles (25 marks)

- (a) Describe Pericles' role in the development of Athens. **4**
- (b) Explain the significance of ONE event in the career of Pericles. **6**
- (c) Discuss the nature of the relationship between Pericles and prominent individuals. **15**

Question 19 — Option G: Greece – Alexander the Great (25 marks)

- (a) Describe the education of Alexander the Great. **4**
- (b) Explain the significance of ONE event in the career of Alexander the Great. **6**
- (c) Discuss the manner and impact of the death of Alexander the Great. **15**

Question 20 — Option H: Rome – Tiberius Gracchus (25 marks)

- (a) Describe the education of Tiberius Gracchus. **4**
- (b) Explain the significance of ONE event in the career of Tiberius Gracchus. **6**
- (c) Discuss the manner and impact of the death of Tiberius Gracchus. **15**

Question 21 — Option I: Rome – Julius Caesar (25 marks)

- (a) Describe the education of Julius Caesar. **4**
- (b) Explain the significance of ONE event in the career of Julius Caesar. **6**
- (c) Discuss the manner and impact of the death of Julius Caesar. **15**

Question 22 — Option J: Rome – Agrippina the Younger (25 marks)

- (a) Describe the basis of Agrippina the Younger's power. **4**
- (b) Explain the significance of ONE event in the career of Agrippina the Younger. **6**
- (c) Discuss the manner and impact of the death of Agrippina the Younger. **15**

Section IV — Historical Periods

25 marks

Attempt ONE question from Questions 23–32

Allow about 45 minutes for this section

Answer the question on pages 18–24 of the Sections II, III and IV Writing Booklet. Extra writing booklets are available.

Your answer will be assessed on how well you:

- demonstrate historical knowledge and understanding relevant to the question
 - use relevant sources and interpretation to support your response
 - communicate ideas and information using historical terms and concepts appropriately
 - present a sustained, logical and cohesive response
-

Question 23 — Option A: New Kingdom Egypt to the Death of Thutmose IV (25 marks)

- (a) To what extent did queens contribute to the reunification of New Kingdom Egypt? **25**

OR

- (b) Assess the importance of the ‘warrior pharaoh’ image during this period. **25**

Question 24 — Option B: New Kingdom Egypt – Amenhotep III to the Death of Ramesses II (25 marks)

- (a) To what extent were relations with the Hittites important during this period? **25**

OR

- (b) Assess the contribution of Ramesses II to Egypt during this period. **25**

Question 25 — Option C: The Ancient Levant – First Temple Period
c. 970–586 BC (25 marks)

- (a) To what extent was the building of the First Temple important for the success of Solomon’s reign? **25**

OR

- (b) To what extent were relations between Israel and Judah successful during the 8th Century BC? **25**

Question 26 — Option D: Persia – Cyrus II to the Death of Darius III
(25 marks)

- (a) Evaluate Cyrus II’s contribution to the establishment of the Persian Empire. **25**

OR

- (b) To what extent does Darius I deserve the title ‘the Great’? **25**

Question 27 — Option E: Imperial China – The Qin and Han 247–87 BC
(25 marks)

- (a) To what extent were legal reforms more significant than cultural reforms during the Qin Dynasty? **25**

OR

- (b) Evaluate the contributions of the empress dowagers to the Han Dynasty. **25**

Question 28 — Option F: The Greek World 500–440 BC (25 marks)

- (a) Assess the importance of Miltiades' role for the Greek victory at Marathon. **25**

OR

- (b) To what extent were the activities of the Peloponnesian League a response to Athenian imperialism during this period? **25**

**Question 29 — Option G: 4th-Century Greece to the Death of Philip II
(25 marks)**

- (a) Assess the significance of the 'King's Peace' for developments in Greece between 387 and 362 BC. **25**

OR

- (b) To what extent was Phillip II a successful Macedonian king? **25**

**Question 30 — Option H: The Fall of the Roman Republic 78–31 BC
(25 marks)**

- (a) To what extent did the use of the army contribute to political developments in the late Republic? **25**

OR

- (b) Assess the significance of the *optimates* and *populares* during this period. **25**

Please turn over

Question 31 — Option I: The Augustan Age 44 BC – AD 14 (25 marks)

- (a) To what extent were equestrians more significant than freedmen for the Augustan principate? **25**

OR

- (b) Evaluate the success of the provincial government of Augustus. **25**

Question 32 — Option J: The Julio-Claudians AD 14–69 (25 marks)

- (a) Evaluate the success of Nero as *princeps*. **25**

OR

- (b) To what extent did the image of the *princeps* change during this period? **25**

End of paper



NSW Education Standards Authority

2025 HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

Ancient History

Source Booklet

**Sources
A – D**

Source A (page 2)

Source B (page 2)

Source C (page 3)

Source D (page 4)

Source A

Graffito found at the Basilica of Pompeii

I'm amazed, oh wall, that you haven't fallen into ruins
since you hold the boring scribbles of so many writers.

© Ancient Graffiti Org

Source B

Bronze fish hooks from Pompeii

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until permission has been obtained.

Source C

Extract from ‘New DNA evidence at Pompeii reveals surprises about identities of Vesuvius eruption victims’ from CBS News, 2024

New DNA evidence at Pompeii reveals surprises about identities of Vesuvius eruption victims

Observers see stories [in the human remains from Pompeii] ... like a mother holding a child ...

But new DNA evidence suggests things were not as they seem — and these prevailing interpretations come from looking at the ancient world through modern eyes.

“We were able to disprove or challenge some of the previous narratives built upon how these individuals were kind of found in relation to each other,” said Alissa Mittnik ...

Mittnik and her colleagues discovered that the person thought to be a mother was actually a man unrelated to the child ...

Researchers focused on 14 casts undergoing restoration, extracting DNA from the fragmented skeletal remains that mixed with them. They hoped to determine the sex, ancestry and genetic relationships between the victims.

Researchers also confirmed Pompeii citizens came from diverse backgrounds but mainly descended from eastern Mediterranean immigrants ...

Earlier this year, three researchers won a \$700,000 prize for using artificial intelligence to read a 2,000-year-old scroll that was scorched in the Vesuvius eruption. ...

The scroll’s author was “probably Epicurean philosopher Philodemus,” writing “about music, food, and how to enjoy life’s pleasures,” wrote contest organizer Nat Friedman on social media.

© CBS News

Source D

Image showing identification of writing on a scroll from Herculaneum using artificial intelligence (AI)

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