

# 2022 VCE Ancient History external assessment report

## General comments

The year 2022 saw the introduction of a new examination format with a greater number of short- and medium-length responses required and only one essay. Students seemed to handle the new format well, selecting the relevant components of the examination confidently and responding with appropriate material.

In Section A there was a strong reliance on the sources; more ‘own knowledge’ was needed to score higher than mid-range for most of these answers.

In Section B, having to write only one essay seemed to give students more ‘breathing space’ to develop a cohesive and relevant response. There were fewer very short essays than has been seen previously.

Many responses included no dates at all. Dates help to locate specific events and emphasise change, continuity and the relationships between historical factors.

Students need to quote, paraphrase or otherwise draw on primary sources and historical interpretations. Many responses to the ‘evaluate’ questions and essays contained no references of this kind at all. Such references are part of the criteria and the highest marks are only awarded to students who meet all the criteria.

Students should carefully read all parts of the questions. Some questions referred to specific time periods (‘before the Amarna Period’), multiple dates (‘490 BCE and 480 BCE’), multiple sources (‘Using Source 10, Source 11 and your own knowledge...’), multiple requirements (‘explain the role of...include one significant change’) or multiple historical elements (‘First Triumvirate and the Second Triumvirate’). Students should aim to address all aspects of the question.

It may be useful to define key terms, especially for questions that require longer responses. These responses will rest heavily on the student’s basic understanding of the terms (e.g. ‘expressed power’ or ‘oligarchy’). Defining them at the outset may help to provide a focus for the student’s argument.

Students should be careful about using technical terms (*ma’at*, *imperium*, *stasis*). If these words are meant to add to the student’s work they should be defined and explained; the word itself does not make an argument or show detailed knowledge of the ancient world.

Students should avoid counterfactuals, especially when trying to show the significance of historical events. (‘If Caesar had not been made consul...’, ‘If Alcibiades had not been recalled to Athens...’, ‘If the Amen priesthood had not been so powerful...’).

## Specific information

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

This report will consider the various command words ('outline', 'explain', 'evaluate' and 'analyse') first and then discuss the specific questions that used those command words.

### Outline

An outline question appeared in Questions 1 (Egypt), 2 (Greece) and 3 (Rome), and in each case was worth three marks. The main requirement of these questions was for students to demonstrate comprehension of a specific source by giving a brief summary of whatever feature was specified in the question (e.g. 'how Hatshepsut presents herself as pharaoh' or 'the role of Romulus in the foundation narrative of Rome').

Students only needed to use the material in the source provided. There is no need for students to show their own knowledge for this question; doing so did not gain students any extra marks. The best way to show comprehension of the source was to quote directly (although clear paraphrasing was in most cases accepted).

Almost all students organised their response into a single coherent paragraph and the highest-scoring responses identified at least three distinct points, with each of those points supported by at least one relevant quotation.

Dot points consisting only of isolated quotations were not usually a sufficient way to gain full marks as they do not provide an overview of the material or demonstrate comprehension of the source.

Most students scored highly for the 'outline' questions.

#### Egypt, Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	1	3	20	76	2.7

The point of this source is that Hatshepsut presented herself as a 'king' (i.e. adopting 'the traditional masculine imagery and ideology of kingship'). Most students recognised this was the focus of the source and built a clear response around that. The highest-scoring student responses referred directly to Hatshepsut's presentation as 'a male in the traditional garb and poses of past pharaohs', her wearing of the 'royal beard' and the application of 'masculine titles and pronouns'.

#### Greece, Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	1	5	22	72	2.7

This question asked about the relationship between the physical environment and the political development of Ancient Greece. Most students identified that there were two elements in the question and addressed both. Relevant material from the source about the environment includes the 'mountainous nature of Greece' and the 'isolation of city-states'. The political development includes the 'rise of strong feelings of independence and autonomy', the development of unique 'forms of government, institutions and community life', the growth of the 'corporate life of a polis' and the realisation of 'self-sufficiency'.

## Rome, Question 3a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	2	10	23	65	2.5

This question was about the role of Romulus in the foundation narrative. Relevant features of the source include Romulus killing Remus, thus he 'obtained the sole power', followed by the fortification of the Palatine, offering sacrifice to the gods, giving the people laws and organising society. Some students signposted their response by pointing out Romulus's military, religious, legal and political actions; this was a useful way to demonstrate comprehension but not essential if the outline was otherwise accurate.

The average score for this question was lower than the other two 'outline' questions. Some students seemed unclear about what was meant by 'foundation narrative', although this is a term in the study design (and the source is a succinct telling of that narrative), and therefore perhaps felt they needed to go outside of the source to answer this question. However, this tended to lead to responses about how the source was allegorical of Roman values, which was not the point of this question.

## Explain

There was at least one 'explain' question for each civilisation, worth four or five marks. All 'explain' questions asked for references to at least one source as well as the use of a student's own knowledge.

An 'explain' question required students to give an account of something (why it happened, how it was important) with particular emphasis on causes, effects, change, continuity and the relationship between relevant elements.

For these questions, relying on the source for the answer was not sufficient for a high-scoring response. As this examination demonstrated, there may be questions that are not linked to any source, so students have to be prepared to explain the broad range of historical factors indicated in the study design.

Where a source was provided, many students essentially summarised the entire source and provided no substantial additional information; such answers received mid-range scores. Indeed, by far the greatest limitation observed in these responses was the failure to go beyond the sources.

It might be useful for a student to ask themselves, 'If there was no source provided, what would I have to say about this thing?' The highest-scoring responses included meaningful additional historical knowledge. Historical knowledge may include dates, names, people, places, events, statistics and other numbers. It can also be useful for a student to define any subject- or civilisation-specific terms in the question; this can help to focus the response.

## Egypt, Question 1c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	4	5	40	36	15	2.5

Most responses summarised the information in the source, recognising that the workers were important, working 'directly for their pharaohs' and possessing 'prestige and respect'. Note, however, that the question asked specifically about the occupations of the workers at Deir el-Medineh. Few responses explained what the workers were doing and what the significance of this site was.

## Egypt, Question 1d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	14	13	25	29	16	3	2.3

This was the first 'explain' question in the new examination format that did not have a source linked to it. This meant that students had to use their own knowledge to provide a relevant response. Most responses identified that there was an important relationship between religion and politics (frequently using terms like 'propaganda' to characterise this relationship). Often there was not much detail and so the discussion of the relationship between 'church and state' was fairly generic. The highest-scoring responses referred specifically to the growth of Amen's cult in Thebes from the 12th to the 18th Dynasties and the size, wealth and power of the temple in Karnak.

## Greece, Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	1	4	23	42	19	10	3.0

Many responses did not say anything about Pisistratus that was not in the source (although they often defined 'tyranny' in the Greek context). Some additional points that students could have included were the introduction of travelling judges, promotion of the trade in olive oil and ceramics, specific building programs (such as the temple of Athena) and the organisation of the Panathenaic festival.

The following is an example of a mid-range response (it demonstrates a clear comprehension of the source but shows no substantial additional knowledge).

*Although Pisistratus was a tyrant in 6th-century Athens although Aristotle described him as ruling in a 'moderate fashion' with more of a 'constitutional government' than a tyranny. Pisistratus was 'benevolent' and 'forgave' people who committed crimes. Pisistratus also helped the people of Athens financially, giving money to the poor so they could 'make a living by farming'. Pisistratus had two reasons for doing this: one, they would not stay in the city and two, they would focus on their own lives and stay out of Pisistratus' business. Athens during the time of Pisistratus was considered a 'Golden Age'.*

## Greece, Question 2c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	11	41	31	15	2.5

The highest-scoring responses to this question presented a clear timeline of events, connecting Darius and Xerxes to their respective invasions and providing additional information. Many responses were confused and did not clearly distinguish between the figures in the source (Darius, Xerxes and Mardonius) or link them to specific events. Specific battles – Marathon, Thermopylae and Salamis – were rarely mentioned but would have been an effective way to show own knowledge.

The following is an example of a high-scoring answer.

*Herodotus argues that the Persians invaded Greece for revenge. In the Ionian Revolt of 499-493 BCE, the Athenians had helped the Ionians resist Persian control and the Persian city of Sardis had been 'taken and burnt'. Darius the Persian king had one of his servants tell him to 'remember the Athenians' and in 490 BCE Darius sent an invading army to Greece but they were defeated in the Battle of Marathon. A decade later Xerxes was the new Persian king. Encouraged by his cousin, Mardonius, to remember the 'great injury' done by the Athenians, Xerxes launched his own massive invasion force in 480 BCE. This invasion was turned back after defeats at the Battles of Salamis (480 BCE) and Plataea (479 BCE).*

## Rome, Question 3b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	21	14	26	21	17	2.0

This seems to have been a difficult question for many students, with a high proportion of students not attempting this or otherwise scoring no marks. The study design refers to magistracies in general but not to the important role of consul specifically. Most students saw that the question was in two parts ('explain the role' and 'include one significant change') and structured their responses accordingly. Many responses referred to the role of consul in very general terms ('an important Roman official') and did not clearly articulate the functions and powers of this magistracy. Appropriate points to consider are the annuality and collegiality of the role, having supreme military authority (*imperium*), being the state representative in foreign affairs, being the chair of the Senate and popular assemblies. Relevant changes to the role include the various laws that admitted plebeians to the role and defiance of the conventions of the role by the likes of Marius and Pompey.

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

*Within the Roman Republic, the consuls essentially acted as the executive branch of the government. They were meant to provide political leadership (such as by representing Rome when dealing with other nations) and military leadership (the power of imperium). Two consuls were elected by the Centuriate Assembly for a one-year term and during that time each had veto power over the other. In the early republic, both consuls were patricians but after the Licinian-Sextian laws of 367 BCE, plebeians became eligible for the consulship. By 287 BCE, the Hortensian Laws established that at least one consul had to be plebeian and finally in 133 BCE, both consuls were plebeian.*

## Rome, Question 3c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	6	12	29	29	16	9	2.7

This question was unique in that it required the use of two sources and the student's own knowledge. A judicious balance of the three was a feature of the highest-scoring responses. As was common to the 'explain' questions, most students' responses were limited to summarising the salient points of the written source (essentially that the war had a negative impact on the people and cities of Italy) and pointing out a few key places on the map. Common errors in interpreting this map were to say it represented a decline in Roman power (possibly comparing it to maps showing Rome at its period of greatest extent) or not knowing that Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica had been annexed before the Second Punic War. High-scoring responses included own knowledge such as the decline of independent small farmers, the rise of *latifundia* and senatorial land-holding, the increased reputation of the Senate and the adoption of Hannibal's techniques by the Roman army.

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

*According to Hoyos in Source 10, the Second Punic War changed Ancient Rome immensely as "Romans claimed that Hannibal had killed 300,00 people and destroyed 400 cities in Italy" with the population declining from 273,000 in 225 BCE at the beginning of the war to 214,000 by 204 BCE, near the conclusion of the war. Many "great cities" were "captured, looted and punished with large enslavements". Despite this, there were also many positive changes, as the defeat of Hannibal at Zama in 202 BCE by Scipio Africanus allowed for the annexation and acquisition of territories in Spain, established in his earlier invasion of 204 BCE (this territory is outlined in Source 11). The Second Punic War also changed Rome as it prompted the republic's 'Agrarian Crisis'. Essentially, due to many, long military campaigns, middle-class farmers could no longer maintain their properties and gave them up to wealthy landowners.*

*The impoverished rural populations Hoyos mentions would migrate to the cities resulting in overcrowding and the emergence of the new urban mob class known as the 'capite censi' ('head count').*

## Analyse

The command term 'analyse' asks students to identify important historical elements and discuss the implications of those elements and the relationships between them. The analyse questions in the examination all made reference to a source and had a relatively narrow focus on an item in the study design ('funerary customs of New Kingdom Egypt', 'Brasidas in the Peloponnesian War' and 'the political career of Cornelius Sulla'). As with the explain questions, students often relied heavily on the source and in many cases did not bring in much additional knowledge.

### Egypt, Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	10	11	27	27	19	5	2.5

Many responses relied on describing the image and making very generic comments about attitudes towards life and death (rather than funerary customs more specifically). High-scoring responses commented on specific elements of the image and what they might mean – the fertility of the marsh, hunting animals symbolising triumph over nature, a lively depiction of what the deceased enjoyed in life and hoped to enjoy eternally in the afterlife. Other elements that could be included in a high-scoring response were details about the preparation of tombs and bodies, magic rituals and grave goods, and the considerable time, effort and resources put into funerary customs by the elites of society (such as the scribe in the image).

### Greece, Question 2d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	24	24	20	13	12	7	1.9

Evidently, many students did not know who Brasidas was or what he did. Many responses were brief variations on 'Brasidas was active militarily during the Peloponnesian War in places such as Sphacteria and Amphipolis', and there was a high proportion of zero marks given for this question. High-scoring responses identified that Brasidas was a dynamic Spartan general who used both diplomacy and military acumen in conflict with Athens and its allies. The highest-scoring responses provided some detailed explanation of his role in places such as Thrace and, especially, Amphipolis.

The following is an example of a very high-scoring response.

*Brasidas played a significant role with his Thracian campaign (424-422 BCE, indicated on the map in Source 8) which was part of the Archidamian War of 431-421. Brasidas, through diplomacy not typical of a Spartan general, peacefully convinced Athenian allies such as Chalcidice, Sicone and Amphipolis to revolt against Athens, thereby undermining the authority of the Athenian Empire. These revolts also signified growing alienation by Athenian allies due to their mistreatment from Athenian imperialism or what Cartledge calls "the dark side of democracy". Brasidas deployed forces in Thrace (highlighted in Source 8) against Athenian allies, to divert attention from Athenian successes near Sparta after the Athenian seizure of Pylos and Sphacteria (also shown in Source 8) in 425, in which the Athenians held Spartans hostage. Brasidas died alongside his rival Cleon at the Battle of Amphipolis (422 BCE), having successfully diverted Athenian attention from advancements in Sparta and having inflamed discontent amongst Athenian allies. The death of the provocative Brasidas paved the way for the Peace of Nicias (421 BCE), bringing a temporary halt to the Peloponnesian War.*

## Rome, Question 3d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	4	8	23	35	21	10	2.9

The source provided plenty of information for students to work with in this question and many responses gave a clear and engaging description of Sulla's more violent actions. Many students were able to develop a discussion of Sulla's use of proscriptions and claim to the dictatorship. Note, however, that the question was about his political career, so a focus on military action and violence was not sufficient (although it could be effectively linked to politics). Additional relevant political points include Sulla's attempts to reinforce senatorial authority, his enforcement of the *cursus honorum* and the limits he put on the tribunate.

## Evaluate

An 'evaluate' question asks a student to make a judgement and then to support that judgement with knowledge and evidence (possibly also drawing on a provided source). Note that 'evidence' in this context means primary sources and/or historical interpretations. Evaluate questions require careful reading by the student. Some of these questions asked the student to evaluate the extent to which some historical element was significant. For these questions it is reasonable for a student to consider a range of elements, weighing up their significance against each other. Other evaluate questions are more focused, asking for a detailed discussion of how and why one particular element was significant (see specific questions below for more on this).

## Egypt, Question 1e.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	15	5	9	20	18	13	10	7	2	3.4

This question was about the role of Tutankhamun in the Amarna Period. The focus must therefore have been on Tutankhamun. Most students drew on the text of the Restoration Stela to frame the response and this provided a satisfactory if limited basis for an answer (limited because they tended to accept the assertions of the stela as the uncomplicated truth). Some students assumed that the stela described a situation caused by Tutankhamun and thus argued that he was responsible for the Amarna Period. High-scoring responses included features such as Tutankhamun's change of name, moving of the capital back to Thebes, a return to war and diplomacy and the resumption of traditional festivals such as the Opet. The highest-scoring responses also considered the role of the likes of Ay and Horemheb in influencing Tutankhamun, and thus took a more nuanced approach to the question than implied by the Restoration Stela. Some responses tried to incorporate a discussion of Amenhotep III and Akhenaten. While some references to these earlier rulers could be useful for establishing the context of the Amarna Period, they generally distracted from a genuine evaluation (and tended to read like a digested version of a longer, prepared essay on the Amarna Period).

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

*Tutankhamun played an important role in restoring the religious and political problems created by Akhenaten during the Amarna Period. Tutankhamun sought to restore order to Egypt because the land was "left in confusion" as stated in the Restoration Stela. Tutankhamun shifted the religious focus of Egypt back to Amun after Akhenaten's religious reforms had focused on the monotheistic worship of the Aten. Tutankhamun reopened the temples of Amun and the other gods, revitalising the "temples of gods and goddesses that had turned to neglect". He did this by "increasing tributes" and multiplying the "gold, bronze and silver" given to the temples. In this way, Tutankhamun helped to alleviate the tensions of the Amarna Period by providing opportunities for the people to directly worship the gods again when previously Akhenaten had claimed only he and his family could directly communicate with the Aten. By reverting to traditional forms of worship Tutankhamun demonstrated that he was upholding ma'at (peace*

*and good order) in the style of a traditional pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty. In addition to restoring the status of the old gods, Tutankhamun moved the capital to Memphis, rebuilt Thebes (especially the temple at Karnak) and reinstated traditional festivals. The Colonnade of the Temple of Luxor show scenes of the Opet festival carved during Tutankhamun's reign. Despite the claims made in the Restoration Stela, it is unclear how much the return to traditional ways of life was Tutankhamun's doing and how much was due to the influence of the pharaohs Ay and Horemheb.*

## Greece, Question 2e.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	30	8	12	12	10	7	9	6	6	2.8

Most students recognised the name Nicias although some connected him to the Peace of Nicias rather than the Sicilian Expedition. The phrasing of this question ('extent to which') means that other factors could (and should) be considered in constructing a judgement about Nicias. It is hard to see how a definitive judgement about how much he was to blame could be made unless a student was also able to discuss other factors by way of contrast. Many students could identify one or more ways Nicias was to blame, such as his role in the debate in Athens and his hesitancy during command in Sicily. Many also saw the Athenian Assembly and Alcibiades as having important roles to play.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response (although something should have been said about Alcibiades' defection to Sparta and for full marks, quotations from primary sources or historians were needed).

*The outcome of the Sicilian Expedition in 415 BCE can essentially be nearly entirely blamed on Nicias. However, it can also be blamed on the impulsiveness of the Boule (Council) and Ecclesia (Assembly) at the time who put Nicias in charge even though he opposed the campaign. Initially, in a plea to convince the Assembly to not send an expedition, Nicias overexaggerated the military costs and requirements to invade Sicily. The Ecclesia responded by sending an even larger army of 4,400 hoplites and 100 triremes. However, it was the Assembly's fault for sending three generals – Lamachus, Alcibiades and Nicias – who disagreed with each other on strategy for the expedition. Lamachus' strategy was best (he proposed to attack Syracuse directly) yet both Nicias and Alcibiades ignored his plan. Later, when they were losing, Nicias pleaded once more with Athens that the cause was lost and the Assembly should either recall the expedition or send more troops. The Assembly once more misinterpreted Nicias and sent basically the rest of the navy and army, another 5,000 hoplites. However, it was Nicias' fault that they did not escape the island because of a bad omen in the omen and he stayed an extra month, contributing to the total of 8,000 men dead and 110 triremes lost as well as the 7,000 men imprisoned in the stone quarries for eight months most of whom died.*

## Rome, Question 3e.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	16	8	12	18	14	9	12	8	3	3.4

This question asked students to do quite a bit and many students were able to provide at least a rough outline of the key events of the First Triumvirate. Discussions of the Second Triumvirate were less cohesive and confident. This uncertainty about the Second Triumvirate has been observed in previous years; possibly because Octavius and his contemporaries are likely to be studied at the very end of the year, there are time pressures to cover and consolidate this in sufficient detail. Nevertheless, it is important to cover this sufficiently as Octavius and the Second Triumvirate comprise a significant portion of the study design material. Students tended to make broad claims about how the triumvirates contributed to the demise of the Roman Republic, such as 'they undermined tradition', 'they weakened the authority of the senate' or 'they shifted power to individuals rather than the state'. These were certainly relevant points but could have been

better supported with some detail. Based on the phrasing of the question, the focus should have been on these two alliances. Some students tried to consider the contribution of other factors (such as the Gracchi or Marius and Sulla) to the demise of the Republic but those responses strayed too far from the premise of the question. Note that the question did not explicitly require a comparison of the triumvirates, but most students identified similarities or made an argument about which was more significant; these were valid strategies in developing an evaluation.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response. Note that this answer relies a bit too much on quotations to make the argument; specific historical details were needed to really demonstrate how the triumvirates affected Rome. More details of this kind and less information about the Gracchi may have been the better strategy.

*Ultimately, the triumvirates of 60-49 BCE and 43-37 BCE acted as the principal causes for the fall of the republic, but they were not the only causes. Firstly, from 60 BCE, the First Triumvirate of Caesar, Pompey and Crassus was responsible for the first since 509 BCE for taking “public decisions into private hands” (Beard). Likewise, under the Second Triumvirate (Octavian, Pompey and Lepidus), “Rome was in the control of a junta” (Beard) and run by “three dictators” (Gwynn). Both bodies exerted total control over political in direct opposition to the republican ideal of “collegiality” (Sinnigen and Boak) and this were responsible for bringing about the fall of the Republic by 23 BCE. The power of the First Triumvirate was eventually consolidated in the hands of Caesar and upon his death in 44 BCE a “vacuum of power” (Gwynn) was created in the heart of the Republic. By filling this vacuum and giving rise to August to become “imperator” (Res Gestae), the Second Triumvirate was thus “effectively the end” (Holland) of the Republic. Despite this, however, these bodies were only able to exert power because of the precedents set by Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus from 133-122 BCE. By forcing his fellow tribune Octavius from the Forum in 133 BCE despite his sacrosanctity, alongside subverting the traditional role of the Senate in order to pass laws during his own term as tribunes, Tiberius (and later his brother, Gaius) set a “deadly precedent” (Beard) for the use of force in politics and the rejection of typical Republican principles – both of which were needed for the Triumvirates to be able to exert power over Roman politics. Thus, while the First and Second Triumvirates did indeed bring about the demise of the Republic during the late 1st century BCE. the demise of the Republic began with the Gracchi” (Dillon and Garland).*

## 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
%	7	4	3	4	5	7	8	4	6	7	5	4	6	5	5	5	3	5	4	2	1	9.0

As of 2022, students in Ancient History are offered only one essay per civilisation and are instructed to write one essay overall. The topics in this examination were for the most part trying to consider broadly applicable ideas, drawing on a wide range of elements of the course. As such, students should not expect essay topics to only be related to a single area of study.

By far the biggest limitation in student work was the lack of ‘sources as evidence to support a historical argument’ (as stated in the assessment criteria for Section B). This is a significant and ongoing feature of student work. Students should aim to include a range of relevant and meaningful references to primary sources and historical interpretations. Primary sources can include material culture (which is particularly useful for Egypt). Quotations from the authors of textbooks do not generally constitute historical interpretations.

## Egypt

Students had a lot of scope in how they interpreted the word 'expressed' and this led to many thoughtful and interesting approaches to the topic. Some students wrote essays that focused entirely on artistic representations. Many essays were organised into paragraphs by theme such as warfare, state propaganda, buildings, art or the pharaoh's religious role. Some essays considered how some specific pharaohs conformed (or challenged) standard expressions of power, with one pharaoh discussed per paragraph.

## Greece

This was the least popular of the three essay topics. A lot of students did not know what reforms to write about. Many tried to make the reforms of Draco, Solon and Cleisthenes fit the question, which was not a successful strategy because it is hard to draw a meaningful link from those reforms to the defeat of Athens in 404 BCE. Another common approach was to make a brief reference to reforms in general terms and then quickly shift attention to other factors related to Athens' defeat (Alcibiades, Lysander and so on). This was not what the question was asking and usually led to a low-scoring essay. The highest-scoring responses focused on how Athens was changing politically in the fifth century, especially under the likes of Pericles and Ephialtes, and how the populist democracy of the war period negatively affected Athenian policy.

The following is an example of a very high-scoring essay.

*Athenian political reforms established by Ephialtes and Pericles during the fifth century BCE would contribute to Athens' defeat at the conclusion of the Peloponnesian War by 404 BCE by facilitating a radical democracy prone to demagoguery and over-reaching imperialist policy which caused itself to implode through political discontent and poor decision making.*

*To understand the role of Athenian politics in its own defeat it is first important to understand the form democracy took through reforms. In 462 BCE, Ephialtes diminished the aristocratic power of the Areopagus, strengthening the democratic ecclesia, boule and heliaia (people's court). After Ephialtes' assassination, Pericles would fully evolve democracy allowing it so that every male aged over 18 was required to participate in the assembly, with any individuals being able to propose, vote on and amend legislation through majority rule. This system of radical democracy which built upon the efforts of prior Athenian leaders would allow for war-like and imperialist tendencies as the assembly was dominated by thetes, light armoured hoplites and rowers who constantly voted for war due to their own occupations and financial circumstances. It would be these features, through political reforms that would allow Athens to contribute to its own defeat by 404 BCE.*

*Athens became primarily responsible for the outbreak of the war due to thetes-dominant assembly which promoted an overly aggressive imperial policy. This would be exemplified by the manipulation of the Delian League, initially a "mutual defence pact" (Hughes) but later exploited by Athens to establish an empire, evidenced by its creation of cleruchies in subjugated states. Despite attempts to ease tensions in the Greek world with the Thirty Years Peace (445 BCE), the Athenian assembly would reignite tensions with their interference in the Corcyran Crisis of 432 BCE, engaging in conflict with Corinth, an ally of Sparta. Further to this, Athens would enflame tensions with its suppression of the revolt at Potidaea (452 BCE) and the final straw that started the Peloponnesian War was the Megarian Decree of 432 BCE. Radical democracy, encouraged by the political reforms of Pericles and Ephialtes, provoked imperialist sentiments in the form of "trireme diplomacy" (Hughes) due to the assembly's dominance by thetes.*

*With the outbreak of the war and death of Pericles in 429 BCE due to the plague, the assembly would contribute to its own defeat through its support of the demagogue, Cleon, described by Thucydides as "the most violent man in Athens". Following the revolt of Lesbos (428 BCE), Cleon would lead the assembly into almost committing genocide against the people of Mytilene in 427 BCE. Although the assembly sided with Didotus, the close margins highlighted a growing brutality within the assembly that would truly facilitate its own demise. With the seizure of Pylos and Sphacteria in 425 BCE, followed by*

*Cleon's death at the Battle of Amphipolis in 421 BCE, the Athenian assembly would continue to follow a path to self-destruction by supporting an even greater demagogue, Alcibiades. A man of "unscrupulous personal ambition" (Cartledge), Alcibiades would immediately break the Peace of Nicias (established 421 BCE) by forming a separate alliance with Argos. The assembly continued to grow more brutal and in 416 BCE massacred the people of Melos. The most significant example of the way in which the reform radical democracy of Athens contributed to their own defeat was in the Sicilian Expedition (415-412 BCE). Despite Nicias' insistence that Athens was depleted by previous war efforts, Alcibiades managed to convince the assembly to launch a full-scale invasion of Sicily. The assembly handled the invasion poorly from the start, quickly recalling Alcibiades on charges of impiety and putting Nicias in charge of the expedition despite his opposition. Alcibiades defected to Sparta and revealed the Athenian plans, contributing to the failure of the expedition. The Sicilian Expedition thus serves as a key example of the process by which Athenian radical democracy, influenced by the reforms of Pericles and Ephialtes, was open to manipulation by demagogues and victim to over-reaching imperialist policy, thereby facilitating its own defeat. The Oligarchic Revolution of 400 (in 411 BCE) revealed the degree to which democracy had been fundamentally weakened and Athens was reduced to a rump state by Sparta's victory in 404 BCE.*

*The political reforms of the fifth century BCE instilled by Ephialtes and Pericles (who built on the earlier efforts of Draco, Solon, Pisistratus and Cleisthenes) ultimately enabled Athens; own defeat by 404 BCE. This is because the political reforms which transformed Athens into a radical democracy dominated by the thetes promoted demagoguery, greedy imperialism and violent tendencies. Through poor leadership and decision making over the course of the Peloponnesian War, Athens secured its own demise and brought about the "end of Athenian hegemony" (Worthington).*

## Rome

This essay topic was the most popular. Most students engaged with the concept of oligarchy over time in a thoughtful way, being aware of Rome's mixed constitution and the different types of power (and claims to that power) that existed at various points. A lot of high-scoring essays began with a brief outline of what oligarchy means, especially in the Roman context, and this often provided a baseline concept for the student to refer to so that their discussion of change and continuity had some nuance. Additional specific historical details (especially dates) were needed to give better contextualisation, which is especially important in a question asking for a survey of change or continuity over time. Few essays included a discussion of democratic institutions such as the assemblies and councils – responses tended to focus on the senate, the Gracchi and triumvirates. Often students would jump between key events (such as from the secessions of the 5th century straight to the Gracchi). Indeed, this year's topic really exposed the limitations of essays built around the principal characters of Area of Study 2 (Gracchi, Marius, Sulla and the triumvirs). As noted above, with only one essay topic, students should be prepared to write about both areas of study in the same essay.