# 2025 ASSESSMENT REPORT
## ANH315117 ANCIENT HISTORY

## General Comments

> *This is an incredibly exciting time to study the ancient world. Because now new technologies are enabling the advance of research and teaching techniques in classics and ancient history and the subject is shooting off into exciting new areas of study and ways of understanding the people of the ancient world. (Michael Scott, Ancient history – modern lessons: Can a new wave of Classics scholars save the world? 2019)*

It was pleasing to see that 263 students sat the exam this year, a considerable improvement on 2024 numbers. This may be partly due to some schools only offering the subject every second year but hopefully reflects growing confidence in Humanities subjects preparing students to be critical thinkers. Once again Greece was the most popular civilisation in Sections A and B with twice as many responses as for Rome. Once again, there were no responses on Masada in Section A. Section C responses showed more students chose to study a second civilisation than in 2024. All civilisations on offer were represented in Section C responses with Egypt being the most common choice after Greece and Rome. There was a small number of strong Assyrian responses. Often the Section C essay was the weakest of the three essays due to being short and/ or incomplete. This suggests that some students are not managing their time in the exam well. Typically, these responses often contained sound points on the first page which unfortunately were not then further developed. Students are reminded that there is no advantage in spending additional time on the first two essays at the expense of the third one. Essays that were less than a page in length did not attain “C” ratings on the three assessed criteria.

The exam questions facilitated strong historical argument due to their direct wording which included the terms “analyse” and “evaluate”. Consequently, many students produced high quality responses and there was less opportunity for students to submit prepared responses. The questions covered the main concepts and content of the three modules and adhered to the External Assessment Specifications.

It was disappointing to note that too many responses still lacked direct reference to a minimum of one primary source and one secondary source. The questions all clearly directed students to refer to BOTH primary and secondary evidence in their responses, and since this key skill underpins the study of history, markers penalised responses that failed to include both types of sources. Another negative was the high number of responses that were very difficult to read due to illegible handwriting. Teachers are advised to set handwritten tasks early in Term 1 so this difficulty can be quickly identified and addressed.

# Criterion 3

This criterion examines the student's ability to effectively use communication techniques relevant to the discipline and the question. This criterion is assessed in all three sections with these results being averaged to determine the final rating. This year it was pleasing to see most student responses were in the form of structured analytical essays which directly addressed each question's elements. These responses showed that the student had spent some time carefully noting every element of the question to plan an effective response. These essays began with a confident introduction to advance an argument and progressed through the discussion of key points to a pertinent conclusion. There were fewer unsophisticated introductions this year which used phrases such as "This essay will discuss…" or "I will argue the case that…"

Better responses utilised coherent topic sentences that signposted the main points to be covered in each paragraph and employed key terms from the question, guiding the marker through the analysis. Weaker responses lacked effective paragraphing and/ or resorted to narrative rather than the analytical discussion which is required at this level.

The student's ability to advance clear, logical arguments is assessed in Element 2. While many students successfully demonstrated this skill, in weaker responses students did not discuss an interpretation or present an historical argument. Rather, they recounted the story of a site, event, a society or an individual. These weaker responses tended to feel formulaic, did not address the question fully and lacked subject specific terminology.

Overall, most students correctly applied the spelling, expression and punctuation conventions to communicate a sound point of view, including using civilisation-specific terms. The best responses employed sophisticated language and syntax to communicate complex arguments. Overall, quotations were correctly punctuated, and many responses successfully integrated the quotation into a sentence to support a point. Two common errors again this year were the inappropriate use of first person or second person point of view and present tense.

# Criterion 4

This criterion examines the student's ability to effectively use appropriate sources of evidence to support an analytical argument. The criterion is assessed in all three sections with these results being averaged to determine the final rating. "Evidence" includes historical information and argument in addition to primary and secondary sources. It is important that this evidence is accurate and factual and includes details such as the names of festivals, battles, political developments and leaders. The exam questions directed students to refer to both primary and secondary sources in their responses and failure to do so meant a rating higher than "C" could not be achieved.

It was pleasing to note that most students selected relevant primary sources in their three essays. Better responses employed a wide range of primary evidence – archaeological, epigraphic, literary, artistic – and used this evidence to further an argument, rather than just listing sources. There were also some outstanding responses that synthesised a wide range of sources and complex analysis to develop a structured, engaging argument.

Markers noted, however, that relatively few students effectively used commentary from reputable modern scholars either to shed light on the context of the primary sources or to offer an

interpretation of the evidence. The strongest responses presented a range of historians' perspectives and discussed the evidence on which these historians based their opinions – this effectively linked primary and secondary sources in their argument.

Some characteristics of weaker responses included referring to historians by their first names, not making explicit the point of the evidence they included and referring to evidence that was not coherently linked to their argument. Too often these less able responses contained vaguely attributed secondary sources in brackets after a point, instead of leading a sentence with a confident attribution to a source. For example: " A leading Sparta scholar, Cartledge, suggests that the Spartan citizens had considerable leisure time in contrast to Xenophon's portrayal" is more effective than, "Some historians suggest that citizens had considerable leisure time in contrast to Xenophon's portrayal (Cartledge)."

Students are reminded that they need to use information from reputable modern scholars in their responses. While it may be useful to gain a quick overview from tertiary sources such as Britannica, Wikipedia or World History Encyclopaedia it is not appropriate to include them as sources in exam responses. It is also not acceptable to simply list sources in the introduction or at the end of the essay without also including in-text referencing.

While the use of quotations is not essential for a high rating, many effective responses incorporated some relevant direct quotes, accurately attributing them and incorporating them into the argument.

# Section A – Question 1

**Analyse the relative merits of differing interpretations of one ancient site, significant event or era you have studied. In your response, consider how each interpretation has utilised the available primary and secondary evidence.**

Students needed to consider a range of interpretations of a site and not just focus on one specific area of contestability. While many students were proficient in describing in detail several interpretations, they were less practised in assessing the reliability and validity of the evidence used to construct them. The stronger responses applied some valid criteria to evaluate the merit of an interpretation. They referred to the key concepts of Section A, including the impact of context, bias, omission, reliability and validity. These responses outlined a number of interpretations then examined the context and nature of the evidence used to justify each interpretation.

Effective responses used a wide range of primary evidence – archaeological, epigraphic, literary and geological – and used this evidence to further an argument, rather than just listing sources. They incorporated strong discussion of contextual information and discussion of the origin and contestability when evaluating the merit of sources.

# Criterion 5

## Greece – Delphi

Students rightly stated that investigation of the site over the past 100 years largely corroborates the ancient literary sources and has resulted in many accepted, valid interpretations of the role

and significance of Delphi. Stronger responses argued that the site still holds mysteries due to possible bias guiding past excavations.

For example, the hippodrome, slave quarters and the ancient village that supported visitors to the site have not yet been located, probably because past excavations have focused on Delphi's more famous religious and artistic architecture and artefacts. Prominent cited modern scholars included Joseph Fontenrose and Lisa Maurizio**,** Michael Scott, Tom Holland and Daryn Lehoux.

The strongest responses analysed how the archaeological evidence (Temple of Apollo, Athenian Treasury, Siphnian Treasury, Serpent Column, Stadum, Theatre, Charioteer, etc) and literary evidence (Herodotus, Plutarch, Pausanius etc) enables modern scholars to support the historical interpretation that Delphi played a significant political, economic, social and cultural role in ancient Greek society.

Many students successfully analysed interpretations and supporting evidence of Delphi's social, political, religious and cultural significance over time. Delphi as a place of polis competition, dominance and rivalry was considered alongside its unifying pan-Hellenic aspects, including the erection of monuments such as the Serpent Column that celebrated (temporary) Greek unity and identity. It is very important that dates of events and developments are accurate.

Discussion of Delphi's mythic origin stories and connection to Apollo was fruitful when examining the Greeks' historical interpretation of the site, particularly when linked to the development of the Olympic pantheon and religious beliefs, values and practices.

There was strong analysis of the oracle's role in influencing historical events with reference to some key examples including Michael Scott's assertion that Delphi's physical location on trade crossroads made it a "hub of communication" which likely influenced the Delphi priests' prescient pronouncements. Other responses discussed the changing nature of oracular consultations and practices over time which likely accounted for differing accounts by Herodotus and Plutarch. Weaker responses simply accepted that Plutarch's account was correct because he had acted as a priest at Delphi for several years.

Debate about the possible cause of the Oracle's alleged trance and cryptic pronouncements was managed well, in general, with reference to de Boer and Hale's geological findings of the residue of hallucinogenic gases at the site which appeared to validate Plutarch's account of the Pythia's trance-like state. Stronger responses challenged the geologists' claims by referring to Daryn Lehoux's articles (2007), which raise questions about the interpretation of these scientific findings and the adequacy of the translations of Plutarch's description of the practices on which the scientists based their claims.

## Greece – The Destruction of Troy

When choosing this option students are expected to focus most of their discussion on interpretations of the significant event: the likely causes of the destruction of Troy in the late Bronze age period (c1100 BCE), and most successfully managed this. In less successful responses the essay was structured chronologically and recounted the history of Troy's excavation, lacking structured argument about the merit of each archaeologist's interpretations. Less convincing responses merely asserted that the Trojan war was an established fact without including strong supporting evidence. Better responses examined 2-3 main interpretations in detail to critically examine the nature and validity of the evidence used to support them. Many concluded

that there is still insufficient evidence for us to confidently assert who or what destroyed late Bronze age Troy.

Fewer students this year wasted time describing the characters and events of Homer's epic poems. Instead, stronger responses analysed the poems' merit in providing an historical interpretation of the destruction of Troy. They considered the significance of the gap between the poems' likely original oral construction and written version and the cultural purpose of epic poems and mythology in Greek society.

The presence of the gods as active participants in the narrative was also used to question the poems' merit as historical sources.

The possible negative influence of Homer's famous poems on all archaeologists (not just Schliemann) who have worked at the site was examined by able students. They argued that the aim of proving or disproving the existence of the Trojan war has impacted all excavations and interpretations, leading to confirmation bias. For example, Blegen used his discovery of several unburied human bodies, a few piles of stones and some arrowheads to assert that a major war had taken place, probably with the Myceneans. Less able responses contained little evaluation of the validity of Blegen's claims that a major battle had occurred considering the small amount of physical evidence that he uncovered.

Discussion of Schliemann's likely motives, ethics, methodology and actions provided plenty of ammunition for a critical examination of his claims that he had indeed discovered the site of ancient Ilium and Priam's kingdom in stratum II. The stronger responses discussed his failures within the context of archaeology at the time being an "infant" science and the lack of accurate dating techniques. Weaker responses presented an uncritical biography of Schliemann's life and career and simplistically just denounced him as a liar and a fraud.

Critical discussion of the worth of the Hittite clay tablets as evidence of possible Mycenean settlements in Anatolia and conflict with the Trojans was a feature of stronger responses. Students were able to argue that the possibility of further discoveries concerning Ilium means that interpretations must be re-examined as new evidence comes to light.

## Rome – The Roman Games

This question gave candidates the opportunity to explore several interpretations of the purpose of the Roman Games and to argue for the relative merits of those interpretations. Candidates explored a range of interpretations, including debate over the origin of the games, the games as a device of political power, the games as a representation of Roman values such as *virtus*, and the games as a means of social unity and crowd pleasing.

Evidence for the Roman Games is relatively abundant in comparison to Masada, the other option in this section. Therefore, students should have been able to build their answer around the specific question and not spend too much time generalising or describing various events, types of gladiators and forms of the games. Stronger students showed their familiarity with the significance of the wealth of material from the venues as well as mosaics, numismatics, souvenirs, graffiti and other epigraphic evidence from across the expanse of the Roman Empire.

Stronger responses drew on a range of primary and secondary sources to support their discussion. In addition to literary sources such as Livy, Suetonius, and Cicero, these responses

also incorporated reference to archaeological primary sources, including graffiti and artwork, to argue that the games were entrenched in Roman social life. Stronger responses presented a clear argument for the relative merits of each interpretation, setting out a clear position on how persuasive they found the available evidence. They incorporated reference to secondary sources directly into their writing and engaged with the author's argument, rather than just including in-text citations in brackets.

Weaker responses tended to only consider one or two interpretations of the games, and they did not present a position on the strengths or weaknesses of those interpretations. They relied on a limited range of sources, which made it challenging for them to address the relative merits of the available evidence. Candidates should be wary of how they explain their sources: there were several responses that referred to Juvenal as a "historian", when he was in fact a satirist, meaning that the context of his writing, and his intended audience, was significantly different.

More successful responses were able to indicate an awareness of a range of important literary accounts related to the attitudes about the events of the games, the events themselves and, to a degree, geographic and historical context. Literary sources such as Seneca, Juvenal, Cicero and Tacitus were considered in stronger responses.

# Section B – Question 2

**Analyse how historical context, as well as one or more of the core elements, impacted at least one key feature of an ancient society you have studied. Use both primary and secondary evidence to support your argument.**

The Section B response requires careful planning to ensure all the question's elements are addressed while privileging analysis of the selected key feature. This focus is determined by the External Assessment Specifications for Section B. The Marking Tool did not require students to address all aspects of the selected feature. For example, responses that just focused on Women or Warfare or Drama or Architecture could score well. The 2025 question did not require students to discuss a society's beliefs and values or the geographic context, but some apparently prepared responses wasted time on these aspects, limiting discussion of the question's named elements.

Most responses adequately considered the importance of historical context on the development of a key feature and were able to outline the impact of several significant events or developments. A common weakness was lack of discussion of the society's historical context or connection to a Core Element. There was again some misidentification of what is meant by 'core elements' in this section of the course. Students are reminded that a society's *politics* is not the same as its political system and discussion of *socialisation* and *social norms* does not adequately demonstrate an understanding of the social class system.

# Criterion 6

## Greece

A significant number of students chose to compare the experiences of women in Athens and Sparta. While there were several strong responses that devoted equal time to discussion of Athens and Sparta, most responses struggled to achieve the required depth, detail or accuracy. They often omitted discussion of a Core Element or Key Feature or contained significant factual

errors, usually about Spartan society. The stronger responses analysed how core elements of a society contributed to women's different life opportunities. Weaker responses did not consider the reasons why the experiences of women were different in the two poleis or neglected to mention the impact of the historical context.

Many students were unclear as to what was meant by *historical context.* Rather than consider specific historical events or change over time they simply offered a generalised picture of cultural attitudes and values relating to women in Sparta and/or Athens. Some off-question responses suggested that students were expecting to write about beliefs and values which was not specifically required by the question. They were unable to pivot sufficiently to address the set question and did not score well.

## Athens

The primary requirement to assess the impact of the historical context on the feature was less well handled by some students and tended to favour those who chose Warfare, Architecture or Drama since they could refer to specific wars, battles, buildings or plays when considering impact. Unfortunately, many of the Women and Family answers did not even specify a general historical context such as 600 – 400 BCE or Archaic and Classical periods, and very few discussed specific historical events.

There were many strong responses that analysed the impact of developments in the Athenian political system on Warfare and Weapons. These responses confidently linked the rise of citizen power and representation in government with the rise of the hoplite and naval forces. Athens' growing economic prosperity was also effectively shown in the middle class being able to afford their own armour and weapons. Discussion of key battles illustrated the application of Athenian military values, leadership, strategy and weapons.

This year the Section B question did not greatly support analysis of the role of Women and the Family in Athens. Stronger responses considered the impact of Athens' social and political systems on the range of women living in the polis, including women in aristocratic families, poor free women, slaves, concubines, prostitutes and hetairi. There was some good detail about women's importance in rituals and festivals to promote fertility. Other responses employed thoughtful discussion of popular drama such as *Medea* and *Lysistrata* to highlight the irony of them featuring so many strong minded, influential women characters in a society that denied them any official power. Less successful responses presented only shallow, generalised analysis of women's roles or lacked discussion of any historical developments or a core element.

Many sound responses drew upon a range of primary and secondary sources and discussed specific examples of festivals, battles and political changes to illustrate points. It was pleasing to see sources included not only the key literary works but also archaeological evidence. In less satisfactory responses the plots of plays and conduct of battles were recounted in unnecessary detail without any satisfactory connection to a Core Element.

There were some sophisticated, nuanced analysis of the impact of Athens' economic success and political changes on its public architecture, particularly the civic buildings in the agora and the propylaea and Parthenon temple on the acropolis. Unfortunately, too many responses on this feature were just catalogues of architectural features with unsuccessful attempts to explain the impact of a Core Element.

Another common weakness was too much explanation of the history and influence of prominent Athenian leaders such as Solon, Cleisthenes or Pericles with little or no attempt to show their impact on the development of a Key Feature. These responses were more suited to a Section C essay.

## Sparta

Most students managed this question very well and offered analysis rather than just information. Effective responses analysed the impact of the historical context of the annexation of Messenia and the Spartan fear of helot rebellions in the development of Sparta's structures.

When discussing Women and the Family the most obvious structures to discuss are the social and economic elements and possibly cultural elements. Apart from stating that women had no official political power or role in government, there's not much more that can be said. Better responses analysed the extent to which the social structure and roles had a diverse impact on women of different classes, including helot women, all in service to the military state.

Weapons and Warfare was a popular choice and was generally handled well. This feature lends itself to analysis of the impact of the political Core Element since the organs of government all had a role to play in achieving the military goals. The more sophisticated responses highlighted the point that despite its fame as the dominant military state, Sparta actually embarked on comparatively few military battles in the period being studied. They examined Sparta's insular foreign policy and the protection provided by alliances in the Peloponnesian League through the lens of Sparta's constant fear of a helot uprising which limited their campaigns away from the polis. Some responses critically analysed what can be learnt from Sparta's determined but unsuccessful defence of Thermopylae. Modern scholars such as Paul Cartledge raise questions about the validity of Leonidas' military strategy and his lack of effective defence of the track through the mountains. In general, specific battles were examined well to illustrate points about the Spartans' military policy, strategy, leadership, choice of weapons and their failure to adapt over time to keep pace with their enemies.

In several responses there was some confusion between 'evaluation' and 'value judgment' as they asserted that Sparta was a 'corrupt' society without defining this term or supplying any corroborating evidence. Perhaps students confused accusations of corruption levelled against King Pausanias at the end of the Persian Wars with condemnation of the society as a whole?

A pleasing range of primary sources was used in these responses, including references to Xenophon, Herodotus, Thucydides, Aristotle and early Spartan poets. Commentary from modern scholars who question some of the claims made by Xenophon and Herodotus is particularly useful in adding depth to analysis and evaluation and this was a feature of many strong responses.

## Rome

There was a wide range of sources utilised during this section, with reference to many relevant primary sources such as Livy, Tacitus, Suetonius, Juvenal, and physical sources like the Laudatio Turiae and other funerary epitaphs. Stronger responses also used a range of secondary references from key modern historians such as Mary Beard, Robert Knapp, Sarah Pomeroy, Keith Hopkins and Pamela Bradley.

There were many confident responses that coherently connected historical context and developments in the named Core Element and the Feature. Section B weaker responses simply described Core Elements or Key Features and did not introduce, connect or link information to the question. Instead, they launched into detailed explanations of the role of women or religion. Students must learn the spelling of Latin terms they are likely to use such as *auctoritas, cursus honorum, mos maiorum, aedile, imperium* and also the common social or political terms such as *oligarchy, patriarchal, hierarchy*.

Weaker responses spent too much time describing the basics of the core elements. For instance, when discussing the Roman societal structure, they provided a list of positions in the cursus honorum without any connection to evidence or a feature as required by the question.

Alternatively, some responses focused mainly on the feature such as Weapons without connecting them to any core element of the society. The Women and Family feature was particularly popular with many responses focusing on the role of women in the household, and in the wider Roman social and cultural world. Many responses effectively analysed the role of the paterfamilias and how that related to the boundaries and expectations placed on women through tutela. It is important that students ensure that any analysis of the roles and duties of women is related back to a Core Element of Ancient Rome and is not just a description of the disadvantages women experienced through the lens of a modern perspective.

## Section C – Question 3

**Evaluate the influence of one individual who shaped an ancient society you have studied. In your response, consider the nature of power in the society at the time as well as the motivations, beliefs and actions of the individual. Use both primary and secondary evidence to support your argument.**

Quite a few students took the opportunity to study a civilisation that was different to the one they had studied in Sections A and B. Overall, they responded enthusiastically and knowledgeably about this civilisation and their selected individual and responses were of a high standard. However, Greek and Roman individuals remained the most popular choices.

The nature of the question suited the study of most of the available individuals, not just those who held official public leadership positions. Thucydides remains a difficult individual to write about in this section due to his limited influence in shaping his society of his time apart from his military actions in the Peloponnesian War.

The question contained multiple elements which most students successfully addressed. The requirement to evaluate an individual's influence prompted many sophisticated, complex responses that assessed both short- and long-term impact on a society. Weaker responses lacked discussion of the nature of power in the society and were unable to demonstrate how the individual's motivations, beliefs and actions were influenced by this context. There was again the tendency for less able students to merely recount events in an individual's career using a narrative style and chronological structure rather than analysis.

In too many responses there was a disappointing lack of reputable secondary sources, particularly those contesting the interpretations made by commentators from ancient times. This limited the

ratings available for Criterion 4. Students are advised to closely consider the criteria that may be used to evaluate an individual's impact on their society, both in their lifetime, and the future.

Students are reminded that since a whole section of the course is dedicated to study of an individual any errors about significant events, names and dates are a significant issue. Students are expected to be knowledgeable concerning important details about their chosen individual.

# Criterion 7

## Assyria

The leaders of this impressive empire, Sargon II and Ashurbanipal, were fruitful objects of study this year. Several outstanding responses analysed how information about the nature of power in this society is provided by temple bas-reliefs as propaganda supporting the king's claim to authority.

Less satisfactory responses lacked discussion of the nature of power in this society and merely catalogued the king's military achievements. Better responses argued that while the monarch had absolute power and ruled through the threat of violence, he still depended upon gaining the mandate to rule through the supreme god, Ashur and the support of the priestly class. Ashurbanipal's ambition to be regarded as a cultured leader by compiling an extensive library of texts was analysed in some strong responses that examined the apparent contradictions in his character.

Effective responses drew upon several interpretations of modern scholars to test the validity of the leaders' own claims concerning motivation and aims. While Pamela Bradley is an acceptable secondary source for this civilisation, Joshua. J. Mark (2023), Jamie Novotny (2014) and Eckart Frahm (2023) provide more specialised (and sometimes contested) interpretations of the impact of the specified leaders on their society, including the decline of the empire.

## China

Cao Cao was the only Chinese individual selected for study this year. The lack of contemporary literary sources and reliance on the novel, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, for information about his early career, motives and leadership skills make him a difficult subject to study.

## Egypt

Ramesses II and Hatshepsut were the most popular choices this year, with Akhenaten and Horemheb having only a single response each. Most students discussed the close connection between religious beliefs and pharaonic authority and were able to demonstrate understanding of the concept of 'ma'at' in relation to providing a mandate for rule. Outlining the pharaoh's reliance on the centralised bureaucracy that included scribes, noams and the priestly class provided rich discussion of the extent and limits of the pharaoh's authority. Less satisfactory responses solely focused on the individual and omitted discussion of the nature of power that could be exercised by the pharaoh.

Detailed analysis of Ramesses' performance at the Battle of Kadesh as a case study of his reign enabled capable students to analyse the military expectations of the pharaoh's role, his use of temple propaganda to maintain authority and his pragmatic use of a peace treaty with the Hittites

to preserve his borders. In weaker responses the lack of effective topic sentences led to very generalised discussion and responses became mere accounts of the pharaoh's life.

Students are advised that in exam responses it is not appropriate to compare ancient Egyptian religious beliefs and leaders to Christian beliefs or leaders since they belong to a much later time period and their study is not part of this course.

Responses analysing Hatshepsut's reign demonstrated sound knowledge of the religious ancestry claims that she used to legitimise her reign and described how her political and administrative education in her father's court provided her with the requisite skills to lead the society. Stronger responses contrasted interpretations of her motives and leadership skills from modern scholars such as Joyce Tyldsley and Jennifer Lawless with those of older scholars such as Sir Alan Gardiner. He denounced Hatshepsut as "an evil stepmother."

Architectural and artistic primary evidence were used well to illustrate Hatshepsut's effectiveness in maintaining good relations with the powerful priestly class and to assert her authority to rule in her own right. Some weaker response struggled to effectively evaluate her influence by ignoring the systematic attempt after her death to remove her identity (and influence) from Egyptian history and of course, the lack of subsequent female sole rulers until Ptolemaic Cleopatra VII.

## Greece

Responses that discussed Solon's career and short-term influence were generally satisfactory but often lacked critical analysis of his lasting influence. They simply asserted that his political and economic reforms were beneficial to Athens without considering the impact of his departure before the reforms were fully implemented. While effective use was made of primary sources, most responses lacked any evaluation from modern secondary sources which would have enriched the discussion.

Those students who described the three attempts at power by Peisistratus needed to make this relevant to the nature of power at the time and how the individual influenced his society. Stronger responses discussed Peisistratus' rise to power during an Age of Tyranny in Greece when factional strife was violent and disruptive in Athens and a popularist leader could appeal to the citizens. Some students who focused on Peisistratus wrote far too much about Solon's actions. Successful responses defined the nature of tyranny at this time. Many responses analysed the benefits of Peisistratus' rule but lacked discussion of his negative influence in naming his sons as his successors which lead to discord and violence.

Themistocles is a rewarding individual to study due to his political strategy, military leadership in the Persian Wars, fortification of Athens and development of the navy. Some students wrote far too much about Solon and Cleisthenes' reforms leaving little time to analyse Themistocles' actions. Students are reminded that discussion of the social and historical context and the influence of the individuals can include information about *other* significant leaders, but they need to ensure the named individual's career and influence forms most of the essay. Few responses considered the roller-coaster nature of Themistocles' career and influence from relative obscurity to the 'saviour of Athens' before his exile in disgrace to Anatolia. Some described the nature of democracy in this period that enabled Themistocles to be elected to positions of power and to ostracise his enemies before he fell victim to the very same processes. Several responses were quite simplistic in their evaluation, some being overly flattering while others condemned him for being corrupt and a liar with little direct evidence.

## Rome

In this section, Julius Caesar, Augustus, and Cicero were popular choices in 2025. Stronger responses included a clear outline of the nature of power in Ancient Rome and how the individual used that to their advantage. They then examined the motivations, beliefs, and actions of the individual to build an overall argument for the influence of the individual on Rome. Stronger responses used primary and secondary sources to set out some contrasting viewpoints on the individual, such as comparing Suetonius' and Tacitus' views on Augustus or the changing nature of opinions on Augustus within modern scholarship across the twentieth century. There was a number of strong responses about Cicero that analysed the Catiline Conspiracy as an initial highlight of Cicero's career that ultimately set in motion his loss of influence. Several strong responses on Livia rightly identified the bias against women in the Roman primary sources, and they thoughtfully contrasted this with opinions in modern scholarship to argue for Livia's effective use of soft power.

Typically, weaker responses discussed some combination of motivation, beliefs, and actions but not all three. Often, they didn't evaluate the influence of the individual or the nature of power in their society and time period. Some responses lapsed into narrative, detailing events such as the Civil War or the Battle of Actium without linking them to a clear analysis of Caesar or Augustus. The limited use of primary and secondary sources hampered some responses, making it difficult for the candidate to assess the influence of the individual.

Students are encouraged to utilise primary sources as evidence of facts that support an argument and secondary sources as a way of analysing and interpreting that evidence. For example, it is Suetonius and/or Plutarch who tells us what Caesar did, but Suzanne Dixon or Michael Grant who gives us possible explanations for why he did it or what long term effect it had.