



**General Certificate of Education
January 2011**

Archaeology 1011

**ARCH 1 The Archaeology of Religion and
Ritual**

Report on the Examination

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Section A

Generally candidates seem to be aware of how to approach these questions and many candidates scored very highly on all three terms. Understanding and examples for funerary ritual and worship were often of a very high order.

However there were a number of instances of over-long answers. Candidates should remember that there are 15 marks available for Section A, the same as for each of the essay questions in Sections B and C. Over-long answers in Section A almost inevitably lead to one rushed answer in Section C. The extra marks that such a Section A answer might gain, will probably not compensate for marks lost for a poor answer in Section C.

There were some common errors – some candidates did not know the difference between astrological and astronomical; the correct word for visions seen during states of altered consciousness is 'entoptic' not 'entopic'. More significantly some centres seem to be instructing their students to give a 'modern' example after or in addition to their archaeological one – this usually results in a brief archaeological exemplification and, because students feel the need to move on to the modern one, the opportunity to gain credit is spurned. Modern examples may be useful as a teaching aid to develop understanding but they do not constitute legitimate exemplification in the examination.

It was noticeable that a significant number of candidates studying the Egyptian and Roman options were not able to adequately define and exemplify shamanism, simply writing about 'priests'. Centres are reminded that it is quite permissible, indeed it is good practice, to use other contexts to explain those terms which do not arise naturally in their main option – if in doubt venture outside your specialism to find an appropriate context. Relying on vague ethnographic references or attempting to explain shamanism with Roman evidence is clearly inappropriate.

Section B

There were many very detailed and well-explained responses on the prescribed sites in this section. Centres should be aware of the need to teach these sites in depth and to link them to the appropriate context and other sites for comparative development. A minority of answers were deliberately and rather unsubtly structured around Renfrew and Bahn's indicators of ritual which tended to lead to generic discussion of the broad characteristics. There were fewer instances of generic reference to Hawkes' Ladder of Inference and consequently answers tended to be more efficient and focussed on religious and ritual.

Centres are reminded that new prescribed sites will be examined in Section B with effect from January 2012. Full details are available via the AQA website.

Section C

Teachers should note that the Section C mark scheme has been slightly amended to make more explicit the intention to reward responses which are centred on the question (and which make use of a wider range of examples beyond sites that may have been studied in Section B). The best answers will be theme-led, not site-led.

In general there was too much reliance on one or more sites from the sites specified in Section B to supply contextual detail in Section C which usually leads to a lack of breadth. Centres were reminded that it is not the intention of the Specification to limit the teaching of the unit to the prescribed sites only. Indeed the mark scheme makes it clear that candidates will be rewarded for their use of sites and artefacts beyond those set.

Many students responded well to the whole range of these questions, producing well-supported answers within the time available. A small minority only managed to answer a single question, and some answered two questions very unevenly (see comment in Section A). Both scenarios have a significant impact on the final total mark.

Question 7: This was a good example of a question where candidates' answers ranged from excellent to poor. At the weaker end there was much repetition with many candidates opting for a site-centered approach often focussing on just the two prescribed sites of Newgrange and Stonehenge with much repetition of summer and winter solstice. Some candidates also used Lascaux as a connection to the stars. Better candidates organised their responses around the types of evidence - alignments, circles and cycles, lightboxes etc and drew on examples to illustrate each of these. When a candidate approached the question in this way, access to the higher levels was usually assured. Some of the weakest candidates grasped at Wetwang from Section B but given that they discussed corpses only, that clearly did not meet the requirement of focusing on monuments.

Question 8: Some answers addressed only the shape of the caves and did not mention the art which should have been the main focus as the question demanded. Lascaux was often the only example offered while others alluded to Newgrange which is neither palaeolithic nor a cave site.

Question 9: This question was not well answered. Many candidates could not move beyond the Section B prescribed site of Wetwang. There was little awareness any other Iron Age sites. There was much confusion of periods with Newgrange, Flag Fen and the Amesbury Archer being adduced as examples despite being from the wrong periods. It should also be pointed out that Bog Bodies were not credit-worthy here being sacrificial depositions rather than funerary.

Question 10: Many answers attempted to apply neolithic sites, particularly Newgrange to this question and there was a significant lack of understanding of the relevant period. There was a real confusion and lack of understanding of the word 'Mesolithic' with answers on megalithic art and 'monotheism' while others discussed sites from other periods.

Question 11: A majority of candidates had good knowledge here, perhaps due to the currency of the British Museum exhibition but others were clearly unaware of the fact that this is not an actual ritual but something that Egyptians believed would happen - a belief not a real life ritual.

Question 12: A significant minority of answers were guilty of irrelevance due to discussion of 'tombs and pyramids' rather than 'temples' – a result of careless reading of the question or wishful thinking. It was clear that some candidates attempted to fit prepared answers to this question however dubious the match.

Question 13: Not very popular, but quite well done. Suitable features to comment upon included the Nile, sunrise/sunset and various animals.

Question 14: A similar issue arose here as in question 12, in that there was significant discussion of 'tombs and temples' rather than 'pyramids'.

Question 15: A variety of approaches here with some candidates opting for a discussion based

on a single site, such as Bath, or alternatively using the five prescribed sites and pointing out any, sometimes tenuous, connections with water. Better answers drew upon a range of sites where water featured.

Question 16: Strangely, not a popular question. Centres are reminded that where sites are well known and integral to the religion and ritual of the period a site-based question might occasionally feature in Section C. (Uley will be one of the sites examined in Section B from January 2012 onwards.)

Question 17: A central concept in Roman religion – not a popular question, but generally very well answered.

Question 18: The least well answered of the Roman section. There were plenty of opportunities to comment sensibly on the role of statues in Roman religion – representations of gods, cult statues, ancestor busts etc were suitable focus points for discussion.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.
