

A-LEVEL ARCHAEOLOGY

ARCH3 World Archaeology
Report on the Examination

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A-level Archaeology Unit 3 World Archaeology

General comments

Performance this year was broadly in line with last year. It was pleasing to note that most students adapted and applied their knowledge well to the questions set. There were relatively few very weak essays and rubric infringements, and very little evidence of students running out of time. Most students used appropriate technical language and almost all provided case study material related to the question topic. It was encouraging to see students presenting sound arguments on the issues raised, and the most able students deployed an impressive range of case studies to support points made. It was pleasing to note a decline in the reliance on the Amesbury Archer in questions on status and technology.

There were marked contrasts in the numbers of different questions attempted by students. In some cases, nine or 10 different questions were attempted. Disappointingly, some students – often the most able - restricted their own potential by writing pre-prepared responses to questions. Question 02 elicited examples of this approach, with some students describing a number of theories about the origins of agriculture, rather than using their knowledge of early farming sites to discuss the **impact** of agriculture. Students needed to demonstrate higher level thinking skills from Bloom's Taxonomy. It would be helpful if schools and colleges could develop students' understanding of the focus of questions, help students to formulate responses and make appropriate selections from case material studied. Not only will these skills enable students to reach the highest levels of the mark scheme, they are also key transferable skills for Higher Education and employment.

As in previous years, there was considerable imbalance in the popularity of particular questions. The most popular questions were 02, 04, 09, 11 and 12. Questions 01, 06 and 13 were attempted by far fewer students. Answers were relatively balanced between the three themes in Section A.

Important notice regarding Cultural Resource Management in Section B

For the 2015 exam onwards, students will be required to demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). PPG16 will not be credited as **current practice**, although it may still be relevant in terms of the development of archaeology and planning policy, and may support exemplification. Elements of PPG16 remain in the NPPF.

Section A: Themes in World Archaeology

Theme 1: People and Society in the Past

Question 01

Students were encouraged to think about the social groups from the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic, and to consider reasons for the size or structure of groups. We anticipated that students would discuss whether these aspects were determined by the environment or whether social needs or human invention were also influential. It was also acceptable for students to compare Anatomically Modern Humans (AMH) with earlier humans. The question was rarely answered and few students were able to define 'social' in terms of hunter-gatherers. This was unfortunate as schools and colleges spend considerable time studying the economies and settlements of foragers and there was good material on Dolni Vestonice, Head Smashed In and on Neanderthals which could have been applied to this question. Recent work by Mellars on differences between AMH and Neanderthal Populations in South West France provides an interesting way into this topic.

Question 02

This question was popular and elicited a wide range of responses. A common pitfall was to ignore 'impact' and write too much about either the reasons for agriculture, or identification of morphological changes in plants and animals, neither of which was relevant. Better answers either adopted a before / after contrast, often focussing on a small number of sites such as Tell Abu Hureyra, or ranged widely, identifying effects and then exemplifying them. Students are encouraged to answer the question set rather than repeat pre-prepared responses. Students who argue and support the points made with accurate and relevant detail can access the highest levels of the mark scheme.

Question 03

This question offered a choice in order to cover two aspects of the specification. Relatively few students attempted this question and some that did attempted to write about gender or status more generally. Better responses drew on Anglo Saxon sites such as Lechlade and the debate about the origins of the English. There were some interesting essays which discussed possible ethnic markers such as swords or brooches, and contrasted material remains with emerging DNA evidence.

Theme 2: Sites and People in the Landscape

Question 04

This was the most popular question in this section and differentiated successfully. There were many reasonable accounts, particularly drawing upon Star Carr and various Ertebolle sites. Surprisingly, very few Palaeolithic sites were referenced. It was pleasing to note that many students reached a conclusion about the validity of the argument. There was also good use of technical language and in some cases ethnographic case studies were employed effectively.

Question 05

This question was relatively straightforward for those who knew the meaning of ‘secular’ and who focussed on structures. A disappointing number of essays appeared to have been pre-prepared answers on site function, and especially on hill forts. There were some detailed accounts based on Black Patch and occasionally Skara Brae.

Question 06

This question offered a different approach to the familiar topic of site hierarchy or relationships between sites. Most responses focussed on Roman or Iron Age settlements. Very few students appeared to have considered Medieval sites.

Theme 3: Economics and Material Culture**Question 07**

This was a familiar topic, which asked students to discuss why particular societies had adopted particular models of exchange. There were some good accounts of the reasons for reciprocity or redistribution. While students gained some credit for describing different examples, if they neglected to consider reasons the highest levels of the mark scheme could not be accessed.

Question 08

This question was rarely addressed well. Many general accounts of metallurgy were given but few students exemplified their answers. The best answers referenced socketed axes, alloying and the smelting of iron. Aside from overviews of the development of tools over time, responses on lithics were rare.

Question 09

This question was popular and students appeared to find it very accessible. Most students could identify a range of evidence. It is clear that some schools and colleges are referencing some of the impressive recent scientific work on this topic. Amongst the huge number of papers freely available on the internet, the international research into dairying is particularly useful for several topics within this unit.

Section B: Contemporary Issues in World Archaeology

In preparing students for this paper it is worth stressing that there are five topic areas and students answer one question from a choice of four set. It isn’t anticipated that students will have covered all the issues in the specification, but a broad range must be studied and students should be aware that questions may overlap two or more key issues.

Question 10

This question took a key aspect of PPG16 and successor guidance, and offered students the chance to debate its merits. Surprisingly few students actually linked it to this topic. Many wrote general accounts about subjects ranging from metal detecting to excavating human remains. Kennewick Man, the Elgin Marbles and the ethics of excavating human remains all made an appearance. Virtually no students discussed the merits of concrete rafts or piling.

Question 11

This was a very popular question. A large number of students recited the standard differences between rescue and research. Fewer students addressed what 'has become'. The question arose from research which involved interviews at several commercial units. The researchers were at pains to stress that their work was often part of larger research frameworks and could also be question-led. Some students did pick this up or found other ways into the question, particularly around technology or archaeological methodology.

Question 12

This question was popular and revealed a relatively wide range of knowledge about community archaeology projects. In many cases, students referred to specific excavations on which they had volunteered. Interestingly, most students disagreed with the statement.

Question 13

This question was less popular than others in the section, but elicited some excellent responses. One particularly outstanding essay related anatomical and social differences between Anatomically Modern Humans (AMH) and Neanderthals to developments in technology. Students who had studied the Upper Palaeolithic focused mainly on art. This was a valid approach although many students failed to expand answers to consider technology, social organisation and exchange. Although the quotation is used in connection with the last ice age, it was legitimate for students to argue against it and to focus upon evidence of symbolic behaviour and creativity in earlier periods. For schools and colleges looking at this debate, the work of Bednarik (who identifies expression as early as the Heidelbergensis site of Schöningen) or Vanhaeren (who traces it back to the earliest modern humans and possibly Neanderthals) would be particularly useful.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

Converting Marks into UMS marks

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

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