

# **Leaving Cert Classical Studies**

## **Sample Questions**

### **Strand 3**

*(Alexander only)*

**Strand 3:**  
**Power and Identity**  
**Alexander**

## Essay Questions

1.	On his Persian Campaign, Alexander fought many battles and sieges. Choose <b>one</b> of these military events and answer the questions below. (a) Describe the course of the Battle. (70) (b) What does Alexander's conduct before, during, and after this battle tell us about his character? (30)
2.	Alexander relied heavily on his army for military success. (a) What were the main components of Alexander's army? (50) (b) How did he use these components to achieve military success in one military event? (50)
3.	What Alexander conducted was, "nothing short of a reign of terror". (P. Cartledge) Do you agree with this statement about the latter half of Alexander's campaign? Explain your answer with reference to the prescribed texts. (100)
4.	Arrian and Plutarch often show bias for their subject, Alexander. Choose <b>one</b> event from Alexander's life and answer the questions below. (a) Summarise this event. (b) How is Alexander characterised in this event? (c) Is there any bias in the accounts of Arrian and Plutarch for this event?
5.	"...in drink, too, he now tended to barbaric excess". (Arrian, <i>The Campaigns of Alexander</i> ) From your reading of Arrian and Plutarch, how big a part did Alexander's drinking play in his life? Support your answer with reference to the texts.
6.	When Alexander ascended to the throne, there were a lot of political tensions in Greece. Discuss this statement. (100)
7.	Alexander adopted a policy of orientalism after his invasion of Persepolis. (a) Outline what these policies were. (40) (b) What was the reaction to these policies? (60)
8.	Compare how Alexander treated the Persians to how Caesar treated the Gauls. (100)
9.	Alexander's treatment of the Persians was a fair and inclusive policy. Discuss this statement (100)
10.	Alexander and Caesar both treated their conquered subjects cruelly. Do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer. (100)
11.	What does Alexander's treatment of the Persians and Caesars treatment of the Gauls tell us about their conception of what it means to be 'civilized' or 'barbarian'? (100)

# Stimulus Questions

Question 1:

Source A



Source B



**Source C**

*Plutarch 10.: Alexander fears his father will choose another to be king*

In the following year Pixodarus, the governor of Caria, tried to form a family union with Philip, hoping by this means to insinuate himself into a military alliance. His plan was to offer the hand of his eldest daughter to Philip's son Arrhidaeus, and he sent Aristocritus to Macedonia to try to negotiate the match. Alexander's mother and his friends sent him a distorted account of this manoeuvre, making out that Philip was planning to settle the kingdom upon Arrhidaeus by arranging a brilliant marriage and treating him as a person of great consequence. Alexander was disturbed by these stories and sent Thessalus, the tragic actor, to Caria to tell Pixodarus that he should pay no attention to Arrhidaeus, who was not only an illegitimate son of Philip's but was weak-minded as well: instead, he should offer his daughter's hand to Alexander.

Pixodarus was far more pleased with this suggestion than with his original proposal. When Philip discovered this, he went to Alexander's room, taking with him Philotas the son of Parmenio, one of the prince's companions. There he scolded his son and angrily reproached him for behaving so ignobly and so unworthily of his position as to wish to marry the daughter of a mere Carian, who was no more than the slave of a barbarian King. As for Thessalus, he wrote to the Corinthians ordering them to send him to Macedonia in chains, and at the same time he banished four of Alexander's friends, Harpalus, Nearchus, Erygius, and Ptolemy. Later Alexander recalled all of these men and raised them to the highest honours.

1. Examine the map in **Source A**. Sparta is the single Greek City state on mainland Greece not conquered by Philip at the end of his reign. What other political tensions existed in Greece upon Alexander's ascension to the throne?


2. Using **Source A** and **Source B**, describe how the political landscape changed from before to after Alexander’s conquest of Persia?


3. **Source C** is an extract from Plutarch telling a story from Alexander’s young adulthood. How is Alexander characterised by Plutarch in the text?





4. Ancient biographers like Plutarch often characterise their subjects differently from ancient historians like Arrian. How does Plutarch characterise Alexander differently from Arrian?





## Question 2:

### *Plutarch 11: The sacking of Thebes*

The Thebans, although greatly outnumbered, fought with a superhuman courage and spirit, but when the Macedonian garrison which had been posted in the citadel of the Cadmeia made a sortie and fell upon them from the rear, the greater part of their army was encircled; they were slaughtered where they stood, and the city was stormed, plundered and razed to the ground. Alexander's principal object in permitting the sack of Thebes was to frighten the rest of the Greeks into submission by making a terrible example. But he also put forward the excuse that he was redressing the wrongs done to his allies, for the Plataeans and Phocians had both complained of the actions of the Thebans against them. As for the population of Thebes, he singled out the priests, a few citizens who had friendly connections with Macedonia, the descendants of the poet Pindar, and those who had opposed the revolt to be spared: all the rest were publicly sold into slavery to the number of 20,000. Those who were killed in the battle numbered more than 6,000.

### *Plutarch 12: The Rape of Timocleia*

Among the many outrages and acts of violence which accompanied the sacking of the city, some Thracians broke into the house of Timocleia, a woman of noble birth and character. While



the soldiers were plundering her property, their leader raped her and then demanded whether she had any gold or silver hidden. She told him that she had, and led him alone into the garden. There she pointed out to him a well, and explained that while the city was being stormed she had thrown into it all her most valuable possessions. Then as the Thracian leaned over and peered down the shaft, she moved behind him, pushed him in, and hurled stone after stone down on him until he was dead. The Thracians seized her, tied her hands, and led her to Alexander, who immediately saw from her captors that she as a woman of dignity and spirit. When the king asked her who she was, she replied, 'I am the sister of Theagenes who commanded our army against your father, Philip, and fell at Chaeronea fighting for the liberty

of Greece.' Alexander was filled with admiration not only at her words but at what she had done, and gave order that she and her children should be freed and allowed to depart.

### *Plutarch 13: Aftermath of Thebes*

After this Alexander came to terms with the Athenians, in spite of their open sympathy with the sufferings of the Thebans. They had been on the point of celebrating the Mysteries of Demeter, but abandoned the festival as an act of mourning, and they treated all the fugitives who reached Athens with the greatest kindness. It may be that Alexander's fury had been sated with blood, like a lion's, or perhaps that he wished to efface his cruel and savage treatment of the Thebans by performing an act of clemency. At any rate he not only agreed to overlook the causes of complaint which he had against the Athenians, but advised them to pay the most careful attention to their affairs, since if anything should happen to him, they might once again become the leaders of Greece. In later years Alexander often felt distressed, we are told, at the harsh fate of the Thebans, and the recollection of it made him milder in his treatment of many other peoples. Certainly he believed that the murder of Cleitus, which he committed when he

was drunk, and the cowardly refusal of the Macedonians to cross the Ganges and attack the Indians, which cut short his campaign and robbed him of its crowning achievement, were both caused by the anger of the god Dionysus, which wished to avenge the destruction of his favourite city. And of those Thebans who survived, it was remarked that all who came to him with a request were granted whatever they asked.

1. What role did Alexander's Greek 'allies' play in the sacking of Thebes according to Plutarch? (10 marks)


2. How are the Thebans characterised in Plutarch's account of Thebes? (20 marks)



3. How is Alexander characterised in Plutarch’s account of the sacking of Thebes? (30 marks)



4. "In later years Alexander often felt distressed, we are told, at the harsh fate of the Thebans, and the recollection of it made him milder in his treatment of many other peoples."

Based on your knowledge of Alexander's campaigns in Persia, would you agree with this statement? (40 marks)






### Question 3:

#### Source A

##### *Plutarch 26-27: Alexander in Siwah*

And so he ordered those in charge of the work to proceed while he himself set out to visit the temple of Ammon. This was a long and arduous journey, which was beset by two especial dangers. The first was the lack of water, of which there was none to be found along the route for many days' march. The second arises if a strong south wind should overtake the traveller as he is crossing the vast expanse of deep, soft sand, as is said to have happened to the army of Cambyses long ago: the wind raised great billows of sand and blew them across the plain so that fifty thousand men were swallowed up and perished. These dangers were present in the minds of almost all of Alexander's companions, but it was difficult to dissuade him from any course once he had set his heart on it. Fortune, by giving way to his insistence on every occasion had made his resolve unshakeable, and the proud spirit which he carried into all his undertakings had created in him a passion for surmounting obstacles, so that in the end he was able to overcome not only his enemies but even places and seasons of the year.

At any rate during this journey the assistance he received from the gods in his difficulties, was more easily believed than the oracles that followed, or rather it was because of this assistance that the oracles were believed. First of all the abundant rain and continual showers which fell from heaven relieved the expedition from any fear of thirst, saturated the dry sand so that it became moist and firm to the tread, and rendered the air pure and refreshing to breathe. Besides this whenever the travellers became separated, lost the track, or wandered about because the landmarks used by their guides had become obliterated, a number of ravens appeared and proceeded to guide their march, flying swiftly ahead of them when they followed, and waiting for them when they marched slowly or lagged behind. And what was most miraculous of all, according to Callisthenes, was that if any of the company went astray in the night, the birds would croak and caw over them, until they had found their way back to the track. When Alexander had crossed the desert and arrived at the shrine, the high priest of Ammon welcomed him on the god's behalf as a father greeting his son. Alexander's first question was to ask whether any of his father's murderers had escaped punishment. At this high priest commanded him to speak more guardedly, since his father was not a mortal. Alexander therefore changed the form of his question and asked whether the murderers of Philip had all been punished, and he added another inquiry concerning his own empire, and asked whether he was destined to rule over all mankind. This, the god replied, would be granted to him, and he also assured him that Philip's death had been completely avenged, whereupon Alexander dedicated some magnificent offerings to the god and presented large sums of money to his priests.

This is the account which most writers have given of the oracles pronounced by the gods, but Alexander himself in a letter to his mother says that he received certain secret prophecies which he would confide to her, and her alone, after his return. Others say that the priest, who wished as a mark of courtesy to address him with the Greek phrase, '*O, paidion*' (O, my son) spoke the words because of his barbarian origin as '*O, pai Dios*' (O, son of Zeus), and that Alexander was delighted at this slip of pronunciation, and hence the legend grew up that the god had addressed him as 'O, son of Zeus'.



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Source B



*Coin of Alexander the Great depicting himself in Herakles lion's skin on one side and Zeus on the other.*

1. What evidence is there from **Source A** that there were some miraculous events on Alexander's journey to Siwah?







4. From your knowledge of Alexander's life and career, what was the fallout of Alexander portraying himself as being of divine parentage?




**Question 4:**

**Source A**

*Arrian : Alexander at Granicus*

For he himself was now almost there, leading the right wing; and indeed he was the first to charge the Persians at the point where the whole mass of their cavalry and the officers as well were posted. Around him a fierce struggle developed, while rank after rank of Macedonians were now crossing without difficulty. Although the battle was fought on horseback it was more like an infantry battle. Horse pushed against horse and man grappled with man, the Macedonians struggling to drive the Persians once and for all from the river bank onto level ground, the Persians to stop the enemy getting clear of the water and to drive them back into the river. But already Alexander's men were getting the upper hand, through their strength and experience, and because they were using lances of cornel wood against short javelins.

At that moment Alexander's spear was broken in the battle. He called to Aretis, one of the royal grooms, for another spear, but he also was struggling with a broken spear and fighting bravely with the stump. He showed it to Alexander and told him to ask someone else. Demaratus, a Corinthian and one of Alexander's bodyguard, gave him his own spear, which Alexander seized; then seeing Mithridates, Darius' son-in-law, riding well ahead of the others, leading a detachment of cavalry in wedge formation, he also galloped forward in front of his companions, struck Mithridates in the face with his spear and knocked him off his horse. At that Rhoisaces charged Alexander and struck him on the head with his curved sword; this cut off part of the helmet, which nevertheless checked the blow. But alexander struck him down, driving his spear through his breast-plate into his chest. Spithridates had actually raised his sword to strike Alexander from behind, but Cleitus the son of Dropides anticipated him, struck him through the shoulder of his sword arm and cut it off. Meanwhile those cavalry who were managing to get clear of the river continued to join the group with Alexander.

**Source B**



*Lyssipus' sculpture showing Alexander fighting against Persians.*

1. Based on your reading of **Source A** and examination of **Source B**, how is Alexander characterised? (10 marks)


2. “He was led more by his passion than his reason on this occasion.”  
Plutarch described Alexander in this way when giving an account of the Battle of Granicus. Does Arrians account agree with this observation? (20 marks)



3. "Although the battle was fought on horseback it was more like an infantry battle."  
How would the cavalry usually have been used in Alexander's Macedonian army?










