**The 12 mark Source Utility question – A Guide**

**General**

* This will be **question 4** in the Greek or Roman **‘depth Study’** part of the exam – **Section B**
* 12 marks are available and you should spend approximately **18 minutes** planning and answering the question
* You will be given 1-3 extracts from prescribed sources you have studied and asked how useful they are in understanding a particular issue
* Any of the prescribed sources could be used in this question

The marks for the question come from two assessment objectives: **AO1** and **AO3**

**AO3** **[6/12]** – ***Use, analyse and evaluate ancient sources within their historical context to make judgements and reach conclusions about how the portrayal of events by ancient writers/sources relates to the historical context in which they were written/produced***

This means:

* Showing an understanding of the contents and views of the source(s) given in relation to the issue in the question
* Using the sources given and others you have studied as evidence and examples
* Using your knowledge of the period, other sources and the provenance of the sources given to assess why they have the views they do and how reliable these are

**AO1** **[6/12]** – ***Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the features and characteristics of the period***

This means:

* Showing an understanding of the context of the sources e.g. what it is talking about or the events included within it
* providing specific and detailed own knowledge to explain, support or challenge the passage
* giving specific and detailed examples from your own knowledge to support judgements

**Planning**

You should aim to spend a minimum of 4-5 minutes reading the passage(s) and planning your answer.

1. Read the question several times and highlight or underline the specific issue you are being asked to assess the extract on – this is crucial to stop you making overly generalised comments about the sources
2. Highlight or annotate the extracts to pick out any content or views which relate to the issue in the question
3. List any events of bits of own knowledge evidence that you know will be important in answering the question
4. List any other sources that you could use to evaluate the passages you have been given

***Does the provenance of the source make it more or less useful?***

***What does the source suggest or imply and how is this useful?***

***Does the source offer a particular view point?***

***What does the source say and how is this useful?***

**Structure**

This is not an essay question and there is no set way to structure this answer. A suggested approach is:

**Introduction:**

* Very briefly outline what the issue in the question is and summarise the context of the extracts

**Introduction**

**The passage(s) is useful**

**The passage(s) is not useful**

**Conclusion**

**Main Paragraphs:**

* Balanced analysis needed – you will not be given passages that are completely useful or have no use at all
* Introduce a point or view from the source, offer a judgement about how useful it is and then explain fully using you knowledge of the period and, where relevant, other sources

**Conclusion:**

* Important part of this answer and needs to be developed in full
* Answer the ‘How useful’ part of the question directly – this should be a balanced judgement but avoid sitting on the fence

**Writing**

The 12 mark question should be concise and closely focused on the specific issue in the question. It is important when you write this to also appreciate the difference between how *useful* a source is and how *reliable* it is.

***How useful is a source*** *–* this is what your answer should focus on. Think about what the source or sources tell you directly about the issue in the question but also what they suggest or imply. Is a source useful because it gives you a particular perspective on the issue or because it challenges the most commonly-held view of that issue?

***How reliable is a source –*** this is not what the question is asking but can be used to help form judgements about the usefulness of sources. If a source is very unreliable, based on its provenance, does this make its views or contents less useful? Alternatively does you knowledge of who wrote the source, when and why improve the reliability and therefore make the source more useful?

Make sure you understand the difference between the two terms above. A very unreliable source can still be very useful e.g. the Old Oligarch’s *Constitution of the Athenians* has a clear agenda and is naturally very critical of democracy. It is very useful, however, in giving us an aristocratic perspective on Athens in the 5th-century.

**Mistakes to avoid**

* **Simply describing the source(s) –** this is very easy to do without realising. Concentrate on offering clear judgements about how useful the view or content of a source is (keep using the word ‘useful’ throughout)
* **Giving unsupported judgements** – this means stating that a point from the source is or is not useful without explaining and supporting this judgement
* **Focusing primarily on ‘reliability’ rather than ‘utility’** – reliability is important but only because it helps you to judge how useful a source is
* **Not answering the question directly** – ‘How useful’ requires a supported judgement e.g. “very useful”, “partially useful”, “moderately useful” etc.