**The 20 mark interpretation question – A Guide**

**General**

* This will be **question 3** in the Greek or Roman **‘Period Study’** part of the exam – **Section A**
* 20 marks are available and you should spend approximately **30 minutes** planning and answering the question
* The question will come from one of the three **‘key debates’** from the Greek and Roman topics:

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| **Greek Period Study – Key Debates** |
| Why were the Greeks successful against the Persians (480-479 BC)? |
| What caused the Peloponnesian War in 431 BC? |
| Why did Athens fail in the Peloponnesian War? |

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| **Roman Period Study – Key Debates** |
| To what extent did Augustus actually restore the Republic? |
| The Characters of Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius and Nero |
| What were the benefits of imperial rule for the inhabitants of Rome? |

The marks for the question come from two assessment objectives: **AO4** and **AO1**

**AO1** [5/20] – ***Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the features and characteristics of the period***

This means:

* providing specific and detailed own knowledge to explain what the interpretation is arguing
* giving specific and detailed examples from your own knowledge to support judgements made about the interpretation
* using your knowledge of the ancient sources to support judgements about the interpretation

**AO4** [15/20] – ***Analyse and evaluate, in context, the interpretations of modern historians***

This means:

* showing an understanding of what a historian argues about a topic
* using your knowledge to pick out an explain the strengths and weakness of the interpretation
* giving, explain and supporting clear judgements about how convincing the interpretation is
* showing an understanding of the wider debate i.e. the other arguments about the issue in the question

**Planning**

You should aim to spend a minimum of 5 minutes reading the passage and planning your answer. You should not expect the interpretation to be immediately obvious or easy to understand – you are being tested on your ability to understand it.

1. Start by summarising the **general view** of the passage – what is the overall argument the historian is making? Write this clearly at the top of the passage
2. Read the passage carefully and break it into **3-4 separate arguments** it makes. Highlight and number these in the passage
3. Make a note of any **other interpretations** of the issue in the question i.e. what other arguments could be put forward
4. List and key events or **sources** you will need to use in your answer

**Structure**

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

**Introduction:**

* Summarise the overall argument the passage is making and introduce any alternative arguments about the issue
* Provide an overall judgement

**Introduction**

**Strengths of the Interpretation**

**Weakness of the Interpretation**

**Conclusion**

**Conclusion:**

* Very important to include – provide a direct and fully explained answer to the ‘How convincing…’ part of the question
* Make this sophisticated - what is the strongest argument the passage make? Does it still have weakness? Is another interpretation stronger?

**Main Paragraphs:**

* Analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the interpretation by outlining arguments made and then supporting or challenging them with own knowledge and source knowledge
* Aim to analyse a range of points from the passage – you should have numbered the different arguments in your planning

**Writing**

When analysing arguments from the interpretation try to follow this pattern to ensure you meet the two assessment objectives:

**Some useful critical vocabulary: *Convincing,* *Limited, Valid, Invalid, Insightful, Limited, Narrow, Broad, Doubtful*, *Correct,* *Persuasive, Appreciates, Fails to Appreciate***

**Mistakes to avoid**

* **Losing focus on the issue in the question** – you are not being asked to evaluate the interpretation generally but in relation to the specific issue in the question. Make sure you highlight this when reading the question
* **Adding in own and source knowledge for the sake of it** – knowledge (AO1) will only be credited if it is used to analyse or support judgements about the interpretation and the question
* **Making unsupported judgements –** these are called assertions by the mark scheme and need to be backed up with evidence to gain marks (AO4)
* **Simply describing what the passage says** – very few marks if you do this; focus on introducing a clear argument from the passage and then on evaluating it. Using critical vocabulary stops you describing
* **Not answering the question** - make sure you have a direct and explained answer to the ‘how convincing’ part of the question. Re-read the question before writing your conclusion and refer to the wording of the question directly