CORE STUDY: CITIES OF VESUVIUS
– POMPEII AND HERCULANEUM

ANCIENT HISTORY STAGE 6 SYLLABUS

EXAMINABLE CONTENT:

1. Geographical context
   - The physical environment: the geographical setting, natural features and resources of Pompeii and Herculaneum.
   - Plans and streetscapes of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

2. The nature of sources and evidence
   - The range of available sources, both written and archaeological, including ancient writers, official inscriptions, graffiti, wall paintings, statues, mosaics, human and animal remains.
   - The limitations, reliability and evaluation of sources.
   - The evidence provided by the sources from Pompeii and Herculaneum for:
     - The eruption.
     - The economy: trade, commerce, industries, occupations.
     - Social structure; men, women, freedmen, slaves.
     - Local political life.
     - Everyday life: leisure activities, food and dining, clothing, health, baths, water supply and sanitation.
     - Public buildings-basilica, temples, fora, theatres, palaestra, amphitheatres.
     - Private buildings-villas, houses, shops.
     - Influence of Greek and Egyptian cultures; art, architecture, religion.
     - Religion: temples, household gods, foreign cults, tombs.

3. Investigating, reconstructing and preserving the past
   - Changing methods and contributions of nineteenth and twentieth century archaeologists to our understanding of Pompeii and Herculaneum.
   - Changing interpretations: impact of new research and technologies.
• Issues of conservation and reconstruction: Italian and international contributions and responsibilities; impact of tourism.

• Ethical issues: study and display of human remains.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

In 2010 the format of the Higher School Examination of this section changed to include a mixture of short answer questions, source questions, multiple choice questions and a longer answer question.

GLOSSARY OF KEY WORDS

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Aediles: Magistrates responsible for maintaining public buildings and spaces.

Amphitheatre: An oval shaped building providing seating, entertainment venue.

Atrium: Open space, central public space of Roman house and centre of religious and social activity.

Basilica: Justice building.

Capitolium: Temple of Jupiter – dedicated to Jupiter, Minerva, Juno, state religion.

Caupona: A bar, tavern, inn.

Castellum: Main water tank.

Client: The subservient in a relationship who has a patron for protection and guidance.

Compluvium: Square cut hole in the roof of a private house within the atrium to provide light, air, water.

Dolia: Terracotta pots in thermopolia contained drinks.

Dominus: Master, the head of the domus.

Domus: Roman household.

Familia: Roman family that lived in the household including the slaves.

Forum: A public Roman space with buildings used for town gathering, official religion and trade.

Fullonica: Cleaning and production of cloth for clothing, laundry.

Garum: Fish sauce.

Genius: God of the male line of descent, the family spirits.

Impluvium: The shallow pool which collected rain water under the compluvium.
Lararium: Private shrine of household gods.

Libertus: A former slave who has gained freedom.

Macellum: Large, covered meat and fish market in the Forum.

Odeon: Small theatre.

Palaestra: Public exercise ground for military and youth.

Paterfamilias: Highest ranking male in a family, Roman household patriarchal.

Peristyle: A colonnade around an outside private garden.

Pistrinum: A shop that produces and sells bread, bakery.

Programmata: Epigraphic sources – election slogans.

Senator: Roman who has public office within the senate of Rome.

Taberna: Small workshops opening onto the street.

Tablinum: Public reception area of the atrium where household records are kept.

Thermae: Hot baths in a communal bath complex.

Thermopolium: A shop that produces and serves hot food and drinks.

Triclinium: Formal dining room in private homes containing three couches.

Vestibulum: Entrance area to a private house.

Villa rustica: A working farmhouse and property, often also a vineyard.

**GLOSSARY OF KEY WORDS WITHIN THE EXCAVATION AND CONSERVATION**

Insula: A block of buildings with roads surrounding.

Pumice: Volcanic rock due to the air content is light in weight.

Pyroclastic flow: Volcanic debris and gas flowing at a fast pace similar to a snow avalanche.

Strata (singular stratum): Layers of material built up or deposited at a site.

Vulcanology: Scientific study of the eruption of volcanoes.
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GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

- The modern sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum are physically different from the ancient sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum due to the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79AD. The eruption greatly altered the topography of the area.

- Pompeii and Herculaneum are located in Rome, (modern day Italy). They are both coastal towns of the Bay of Naples in the Southern area of Campania. The Bay of Naples and the region is dominated by the volcano Mount Vesuvius. Both towns were linked to Rome through an extensive network of roads and via sea routes.

- In antiquity Pompeii and Herculaneum were Roman provincial towns within the wider region of Campania. Ancient Campania was bounded in the north by the mountains of the Aurunci, in the east by the Apennines and in the south by the mountain spur that ends in the Sorrentine peninsula.

- Mount Vesuvius is an imposing volcano that is responsible for the fertility of the grey black and rust brown Campanian plains. The soil was rich in phosphorus and potash. The texture of the soil helped retain water which coupled with the mineral rich volcanic soil encouraged an abundance of vegetation.

- The region of Campania was famous not Pompeii and Herculaneum. Campania was renowned throughout Rome for its beauty and fertile land and abundance produced from the water ways of the rivers and from the sea.

HERCULANEUM

- The site of Herculaneum was on a pre-historic lava flow jutting into the sea, it was situated seven kilometers away from Mount Vesuvius and as it was on a natural terrace it was about twenty meters above the beachfront on steeply sloping and cliff face land.

- The town is thought to be between 12-20 hectares in size. (The entire town has yet to be excavated.)

- This did not make it a very safe working harbour; however it was a beautiful coastal town with dramatic cliffs and a mountain backdrop.

- Many wealthy Romans had luxury holiday villas within the town of Herculaneum which captured the spectacular views. As a result it is suggested that Herculaneum became a fashionable holiday resort for wealthy Romans.
POMPEII

- The site of Pompeii was situated to the south of Mount Vesuvius also on an earlier lava flow that stretches down to the Bay of Naples to the Tyrhenian Sea. It was on a plateau and the size of the town was about 66 hectares.

- In antiquity Pompeii was about twenty five to forty meters above sea level and overlooked the river Sarno which flowed into the Bay of Naples. The river was safe to navigate by sea going boats and the river widened into a calm marshy estuary it was here that a commercial inlet port developed for trade.

- Pompeii was essentially a strategic harbour town in the Bay of Naples as it was at a crossroads of the coastal route from Cumae to the Sorrentine peninsula and the inland route to Nuceria, Acerra and Nola.

- It is thought to have enjoyed economic prosperity due to its location on the fertile plains of Campania and the control it would have had on trade. Pompeii was a key town in the import and export of goods in the area of the Sarno Valley.

- The Bay of Naples provided a number of safe, sheltered anchorages and often the Roman fleet was stationed at one of the ports which provided added safety for the whole region.

RESOURCES

- Both Pompeii and Herculaneum had access to natural water springs that bubbled to the surface to provide an extensive clean drinking water supply which the people manipulated through aqueducts and public street drinking fountains. The cool sea breezes provided a pleasant climate for human habitation.

- The region had a hot dry summer, mild moist winters and an early spring which were ideal conditions for growing food.

- Natural vegetation grew along the rivers such as poplars, willow and alder trees, beech and oak along the slopes of Mount Vesuvius. Herbs such as rosemary also grew wildly in the plain.

- The people also utilised the pumice volcanic stone and solidified lava as millstones for grinding grain and pressing olives. The pumice and lava rock was also used to build roads and buildings throughout both towns.

- The fertile volcanic mineral soil, inland rivers and sunny temperate climate made the region of Campania rich in agricultural produce. The farms produced; wheat, barley, cabbage, broad beans, chickpeas, onions, peaches, apricots, lemons, cherries, plums, pears and figs.

- Sheep were also grazed on the slopes of the mountain and there is evidence of a textile industry.
• Many flowers grew in the area including roses which resulted in the development of a perfume industry. Olives were used to produce olive oil and perfume and grapes were used to produce wine. Olive oil, perfume and wine became very famous and desired products from the region of Campania.

• As a result both Pompeii and Herculaneum were supported by a network of farms and estates. Both towns operated as market towns.

• The marshy lagoon estuary of the Sarno River and the accessible Bay of Naples provided the towns with an abundance of produce. Oily fish such as tuna, mackerel, anchovies and moray eels were caught in the area.

• Pompeii became famous for the production of its strongly flavoured fish sauce garum. The sea salt was also product that was collected and utilised in the preservation of fish.

**STREETSCAPES**

• Both towns are surrounded by walls for fortification and the townships are arranged in a grid system of streets. The main roads (decumani) were crossed by minor roads (cardini) and these created blocks (insulae).

• The main streets within Pompeii were a continuation of the major roads from other towns that ran into the town. The major roads of Pompeii are the Via di Nola, Via Stabiana and the Via dell 'Abbondanza.

• Within Pompeii there are seven major gates that the roads pass through to enter into the town. The Herculaneum Gate, Vesuvian Gate, Cupuan Gate, Nolan Gate, Sarnus Gate, Stabian Gate and Marine Gate. Originally these gates were used as a system of defense for the town.

• The roads were constructed using volcanic stone, raised in the middle to encourage water to flow to the sides. Gutters ran along the roads. A raised footpath ran along the sides of major roads and the buildings were constructed to begin at the edge of the path.

• Most roads are similar in size to conform to the standard width of axles of wheeled vehicles. Most roads are thought to only travel in one direction. Some roads are narrow and blocked from use by vehicles with public fountains.

• Public drinking fountains were part of the streetscape. They provided fresh free water for every person living in both Pompeii and Herculaneum. Many of the drinking fountains were elaborately decorated with carved stone mythical creatures. Water spurted from the mouths of these creatures.

• The fountains also aided in keeping the streets clean as the bubbling water pushed waste into the gutter and down the roads.

• Stepping stones were placed in the middle of the street for pedestrians to use to cross.
• The forum complex was the largest cluster of public space and the major roads ran to this part of Pompeii. The forum contained temples and religious buildings, political buildings and market spaces.

• The insulae within Pompeii and Herculaneum have been found to not have commercial regions or urban zones. Within both towns each insula was individual and could contain a mixture of private villas, homes, shops, crafts premises, service industry premises, entertainment premises, food manufacture, farming land, orchards, temples and baths.

• Due to the variety of industries that could occupy an insula there does not seem to be class distinctions in the location of buildings. The function of buildings has also been shown to change over time.

THE NATURE OF SOURCES AND EVIDENCE
TYPES OF SOURCES AVAILABLE

PRIMARY SOURCES FROM POMPEII AND HERCULANEUM

Classical Writing (Literary)

• Appian (History)
• Cicero (Speeches from a politician)
• Cato (Geography)
• Dio Cassius (History, wrote about the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius)
• Florus (History)
• Livy (History)
• Pliny the Elder (Geography and Travel)
• Pliny the Younger (Letters writing specifically about the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius as an eye witness)
• Seneca (Geography, wrote about the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius)
• Strabo (Geography and Travel)
• Statius (Poems)
• Tacitus (History)
• Vitruvius (Architecture)
Ephigraphical Writing (Literary)

- Graffiti
- Slogans and Programmata
- Entertainment programs
- Tomb epitaphs
- Dedications in stone and bronze on buildings and statues
- Inscriptions on jewellery
- Foundation stones
- Wax tablets
- Proclamations
- Scrolls of papyri (only at Herculaneum)

Buildings (Public and Private) (Archaeological)

- Thermopolium, Caupura
- Baths, Amphitheatre, and Basilica
- Temples and streetscapes
- Private houses/units, Villas and Villa rustica
- Forum, Building of Eumachia and Macellum
- Fullonica, Taberna and Pistrinum
- Odeon and Palaestra

Artefacts (Material Remains)

- Mosaic. A picture or decoration made of different coloured pieces of stone, glass or other material, inlaid to form a simply or elaborate design. Usually mosaics appeared on the floor either inside or outside. Due to their intricate design and beauty they have become famous sources from Pompeii and Herculaneum.

- Fresco. A painting on either wet or dry fresh lime plaster so that the pigments are absorbed into the layers of the plaster. Usually frescos appeared on internal or external walls and incorporated pictures and designs. Due to their detail, mystery and beauty they have become famous sources from Pompeii and Herculaneum.

- Public water fountains and water pipes.
Cooking equipment, eating utensils and ovens.
• Tools, Weights and measures, Work equipment.
• Household shrines, statues and busts.
• Wooden furniture (only at Herculaneum).
• Farming equipment.
• Pottery, Jewellery, Glassware and Columns.

Organic Plant Products
• Grain, farming, vineyard and orchard remains.
• Remains of private gardens.
• Cooked food remains and meal remains, eg. bread.
• Oil remains, Wine remains, Perfume remains.

Human and Animal Remains
• Skeletal remains of humans and animals.
• Plaster and resin cast showing the shape of the body.

SECONDARY SOURCES ABOUT POMPEII AND HERCULANEUM

Modern Secondary Writing
• Giuseppe Fiorelli (director of archaeology at Pompeii and Herculaneum).
• Vittorio Spinazzola (director of archaeology at Pompeii and Herculaneum).
• Amedeo Maiuri (director of archaeology at Pompeii and Herculaneum).
• Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (1994) (British Archaeologist).
• Penelope Allison (1992) (Australian Archaeologist).
• Lawrence Richardson (1988) (Architectural historian).
• Sara Bisel (1990) (American archaeologist studying bones and bodies).
• Estelle Lazer (2005) (Australian archaeologist studying bones and bodies).
THE LIMITATIONS, RELIABILITY AND EVALUATION OF SOURCES

When evaluating archaeological sources, the following questions need be asked:

- Where was it found?
- Was anything else found with it?
- What material is it made from?
- Who made it and when?
- Why was it made and who used it?
- What does this source reveal about its society?

When evaluating written sources the following questions need to be asked:

- Who wrote this source?
- When was the source written?
- What was the motive for this source?
- Who was the audience for this source?
- What is the source about?
- What judgements are made and are they reliable?
- What does this source reveal about its society?