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Ancient History GCSE Curriculum Intent	Year 10

The intent of our Ancient History GCSE curriculum is to ignite students' curiosity about the ancient world, fostering a deep understanding of the cultures, conflicts, and legacies that have shaped human civilisation. Through the study of key ancient societies, including Rome, Greece, and the Near East, students will explore political systems, military campaigns, social structures, religion, and cultural achievements that continue to influence modern life.

Our curriculum is designed to provide a broad and balanced view of the ancient world, allowing students to examine diverse perspectives and to think critically about the sources of evidence available. Students will develop essential skills in historical enquiry, interpretation, and argumentation, as well as the ability to assess the reliability and utility of ancient sources. By analysing primary texts, archaeological evidence, and modern interpretations, learners will understand how history is constructed and contested.

We aim to create a strong narrative of the ancient past, helping students appreciate the complexity and interconnectedness of ancient civilisations. The curriculum also seeks to promote inclusivity by highlighting the contributions of different cultures within the ancient world, as well as encouraging discussion of gender, class, and ethnicity where appropriate.

This course not only equips students with subject-specific knowledge but also develops transferable skills in critical thinking, structured writing, and evidence-based reasoning. It lays a solid foundation for further study in history, classics, archaeology, and related disciplines, while cultivating a lifelong interest in the past.

Ultimately, our intent is for students to leave the course with a confident understanding of ancient history, an ability to draw connections between past and present, and a respect for the complexity of historical narratives across time and place.

Term 1 Topic	**Ancient Persia under Cyrus and Cambyses.**

Big Picture
What are the main ideas and big questions in this topic?

This enquiry explores how Cyrus transformed Persia from a relatively small kingdom into one of the largest empires of the ancient world through military success, political leadership and effective governance. Students investigate how Cyrus established and legitimised his rule, expanded Persian territory through the conquest of the Medes, Lydia and Babylon, and laid the foundations of an empire that would dominate the ancient Near East. The enquiry then examines the reign of Cambyses, considering his conquest of Egypt and the challenges of ruling an increasingly diverse empire.

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Throughout the enquiry, students consider the nature of leadership, empire and legitimacy, while evaluating how ancient writers have shaped modern understanding of Persian history. They begin to ask broader historical questions about why empires rise, how rulers maintain power and how reliable different types of historical evidence are when reconstructing the past.

Zoom In
What knowledge, skills and key vocabulary will we learn step by step?

The enquiry begins by exploring how Cyrus rose to establish the Persian Empire, examining the political landscape of the ancient Near East and the circumstances that enabled his rise to power. Students investigate Cyrus' conquest of the Medes, Lydia and Babylon, considering how military success, diplomacy and leadership transformed Persia into one of the largest empires of the ancient world. They also explore the significance of Pasargadae as the first Persian royal capital and evaluate what it reveals about kingship, authority and imperial identity. The enquiry then examines the death of Cyrus, considering the differing accounts preserved by ancient writers.

Teacher modelling explicitly supports students in analysing both literary and archaeological evidence, demonstrating how historians compare sources, evaluate provenance, consider purpose and assess reliability when reconstructing the past. Students investigate the Cyrus Cylinder alongside Greek accounts, recognising how different forms of evidence can present contrasting interpretations of the same historical events.

Attention then turns to the reign of Cambyses, exploring how he is portrayed in both Greek and non-Greek sources before studying the conquest of Egypt, his role as Pharaoh and the challenges of governing an expanding empire. Students consider the circumstances surrounding the death of Cambyses before concluding with the accession of Darius, evaluating how the transition of power shaped the future of the Persian Empire.

As the enquiry progresses, disciplinary knowledge develops alongside substantive knowledge. Students explore cause and consequence by explaining why Persia expanded so rapidly and the impact of Cyrus' and Cambyses' decisions. They examine change and continuity by considering how Persian government and kingship evolved whilst maintaining key traditions. Students compare similarities and differences between rulers, campaigns and historical accounts, evaluate the significance of key events and individuals, and recognise that historical interpretations may differ according to the perspective, purpose and context of the author. Through the analysis of literary and material evidence, students develop the confidence to question what sources can and cannot tell us, construct balanced historical arguments and reach supported historical judgements.

Throughout the enquiry, students strengthen their historical thinking by developing knowledge and recall of key individuals, events and developments, explaining why events happened and why they mattered, analysing the relationships between causes, actions and consequences, evaluating the strength of historical arguments and interpreting ancient sources critically. They learn to use subject-specific vocabulary confidently, including Achaemenid, empire, conquest, tribute, liberator, satrap, tolerance, propaganda, Cyrus Cylinder, Marduk, succession, usurper, Pharaoh, campaign, siege, mercenary, diplomacy, impious, Magi and noble.

The enquiry concludes by evaluating the extent to which Cyrus and Cambyses established the foundations of Persian imperial power, considering how far the surviving evidence provides a balanced and reliable understanding of their reigns.

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Pre-Requisite Knowledge
What have we already learned that will help us with this topic?

Although many students will have limited prior knowledge of the Persian Empire, they will bring an understanding of chronology, historical enquiry and evidence developed through their study of History at Key Stage 3. Students will already be familiar with concepts such as empire, civilisation, monarchy, conquest and leadership, as well as the importance of evaluating sources and recognising that historical accounts can present different perspectives on the same events.

Pitch Up
How will we challenge ourselves?

Students will move beyond simply describing events to evaluating the complex reasons behind the rise of the Persian Empire. They will compare literary and archaeological evidence, recognise the limitations and potential bias of ancient authors and develop balanced historical judgements supported by evidence. Students will also consider how differing interpretations of Cyrus and Cambyses have shaped our understanding of Persian history and justify their own conclusions using accurate historical terminology.

Wider Framework
How does this learning connect to future topics and bigger goals?

This enquiry establishes the foundations for the study of the Persian Empire by introducing its political structure, systems of government and methods of imperial expansion. Understanding the achievements of Cyrus and Cambyses provides the essential context for studying Darius and Xerxes in Year 10 and later comparisons with Alexander the Great. Students also continue to develop the disciplinary skills of source evaluation, interpretation and historical judgement that underpin success throughout GCSE Ancient History and support progression into A Level History, Classics and related disciplines.

Curriculum Hinterland
What wider knowledge will deepen our understanding of this topic?

A GCSE in Ancient History enriches core content with myth, philosophy, archaeology, and cultural legacy, deepening understanding of ancient civilisations. It provides vital context, enhancing engagement, critical thinking, and appreciation of how the ancient world shaped modern society. Students deepen their understanding of the ancient world by exploring the geography of the Near East, the cultural diversity of the Persian Empire and the beliefs that influenced Persian kingship, including aspects of Zoroastrianism. They examine the significance of the Cyrus Cylinder, the cities of Pasargadae and Babylon, Persian royal iconography and modern archaeological discoveries that continue to shape historians' understanding of the empire. Students also consider how later Greek writers influenced the image of Persia that has survived into the modern world.

Authentic connections
How does this topic connect to real life, careers, other subjects and important values?

Through this enquiry, students develop spiritual understanding by exploring how ancient societies understood kingship, divine authority and humanity's relationship with the gods. They consider how Cyrus and Cambyses used religion, belief and royal ideology to legitimise their rule and reflect on how belief systems influenced decision making in the ancient world.

Students develop social, moral and cultural understanding by examining the growth of the Persian Empire and its relationships with conquered peoples. They explore themes of leadership, tolerance, conquest, justice and cultural identity whilst evaluating differing perspectives on imperial rule. Students also consider how historical narratives are constructed and why different societies remembered the same events in contrasting ways.

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Cross-curricular connections are made with Geography through the study of the physical landscape and expansion of the Persian Empire, Religion and Worldviews through the exploration of Zoroastrian beliefs, kingship and divine authority, English through the analysis of ancient literary texts and persuasive writing, and Citizenship through discussions surrounding leadership, governance, power and political legitimacy.

Skills Builder

- Speaking – communicating historical arguments clearly and using evidence to justify judgements.
- Listening – evaluating different viewpoints and responding thoughtfully to the interpretations of others.
- Problem Solving – analysing conflicting evidence and reaching balanced historical conclusions.

Careers

- Archaeologist
- Museum Curator
- Heritage Conservation Officer

Through this enquiry, students develop transferable skills in analysing evidence, evaluating differing interpretations, constructing balanced arguments, communicating ideas effectively and making well-supported judgements based on historical evidence.

Resources *What books, websites, videos and materials will support our learning?*	**Assessment** *How will we show what we know, remember and can apply?*
Teaching and learning throughout this enquiry are supported through a carefully selected range of primary and secondary sources designed to strengthen historical knowledge, develop disciplinary thinking and prepare students for OCR GCSE Ancient History. • Teacher modelling of source analysis, historical interpretations and examination responses. • OCR GCSE Ancient History Specification and past examination materials. • OCR Ancient History: Greece and Persia (Bloomsbury, Baddeley et al., 2023). • University of Warwick Ancient History resources: The Persian Empire, 559-465 • Prescribed ancient literary sources alongside archaeological evidence, inscriptions and artefacts. • Maps, timelines, royal family trees and visual reconstructions of the Persian Empire. • Retrieval practice, vocabulary activities and examination-style questions.	GCSE examination questions will be regularly assessed in this unit. This paper focus on Paper 1, which has a range of short recall, source analysis and essay questions. The first term will focus on the Kingship of Cyrus. Students demonstrate their understanding by explaining the rise of Cyrus and Cambyses, evaluating contrasting ancient accounts, analysing literary and archaeological evidence and constructing supported historical judgements using accurate historical terminology. 50% Substantive Knowledge: Students demonstrate secure understanding of the rise of Cyrus, the conquest of the Medes, Lydia and Babylon, the development of Persian kingship, the reign of Cambyses, the conquest of Egypt and the foundations of the Persian Empire. 50% Disciplinary Knowledge: Students evaluate the provenance, purpose and limitations of ancient sources, compare literary and material evidence, analyse cause and consequence, explain historical significance and construct evidence-based historical judgements.

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Term 2 Topic	**Ancient Persia under Darius and Xerxes**

Big Picture
What are the main ideas and big questions in this topic?

This enquiry explores how Darius I consolidated and strengthened the Persian Empire before examining the reign of Xerxes and the causes, course and consequences of the Persian Wars. Students investigate how Darius transformed Persia into a highly organised imperial state through administration, taxation, infrastructure and military reform before considering Xerxes' invasion of Greece and the reasons behind Persian defeat.

Throughout the enquiry, students examine the strengths and limitations of Persian rule, evaluate contrasting Greek and Persian perspectives, and consider broader historical questions about leadership, empire, resistance and historical interpretation. Students explore why different ancient writers present contrasting accounts of the same events and how historians reconstruct the past using a range of literary and archaeological evidence.

Zoom In
What knowledge, skills and key vocabulary will we learn step by step?

The enquiry begins by exploring the accession of Darius I and the challenges he faced in securing control of the Persian Empire. Students investigate how Darius established his legitimacy through the Behistun Inscription, before examining his administrative reforms, including the organisation of satrapies, systems of taxation, the Royal Road, communication networks and the development of Persepolis as a symbol of Persian authority. Students consider how these developments strengthened imperial control and enabled Persia to govern one of the largest empires of the ancient world.

Teacher modelling explicitly supports students in interpreting both literary and archaeological evidence, demonstrating how historians compare inscriptions, royal propaganda, Greek accounts and material evidence to evaluate provenance, purpose, reliability and historical value. Students learn that different types of evidence often present contrasting perspectives and that historical judgements require careful evaluation of both what sources reveal and what they omit.

Attention then turns to the reign of Xerxes, examining the causes of the Persian Wars and the preparations for the invasion of Greece. Students investigate the major events of the campaign, including Thermopylae, Artemisium, Salamis, Plataea and Mycale, analysing the decisions made by Persian and Greek leaders and evaluating the factors that contributed to Persian defeat. They consider how Herodotus portrays Xerxes and compare these accounts with Persian evidence to explore how interpretations of leadership can differ significantly according to the perspective of the source.

As the enquiry progresses, disciplinary knowledge develops alongside substantive knowledge. Students explore cause and consequence by explaining why the Persian Wars developed and assessing their impact upon both Persia and the Greek world. They examine change and continuity by considering how Persian government evolved under Darius whilst maintaining many of the foundations established by Cyrus. Students identify similarities and differences between rulers, military campaigns and systems of government, evaluate the significance of key individuals and events, and investigate how historical interpretations have shaped modern understanding of the Persian Empire. Through increasingly sophisticated analysis of literary and material evidence, students strengthen their ability to question historical narratives, evaluate competing arguments and construct balanced historical judgements supported by evidence.

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Throughout the enquiry, students continue to develop their historical thinking by strengthening their knowledge and recall of key events, individuals and developments, explaining why events occurred and why they mattered, analysing relationships between leadership, governance and military success, evaluating the strength of historical arguments and critically interpreting ancient evidence. They confidently apply subject-specific vocabulary including satrapy, tribute, Royal Road, Persepolis, inscription, propaganda, legitimacy, rebellion, campaign, invasion, strategy, alliance, interpretation, provenance, reliability, significance, continuity and consequence.

The enquiry concludes by evaluating the effectiveness of Darius and Xerxes as rulers, considering the extent to which they strengthened or weakened the Persian Empire and assessing how far the surviving evidence presents a balanced understanding of their reigns.

Pre-Requisite Knowledge
What have we already learned that will help us with this topic?

Students build directly upon their understanding of the rise of the Persian Empire under Cyrus and Cambyses. They already understand how the empire was established through conquest, the importance of kingship and legitimacy, and the challenges of governing diverse peoples. Students are familiar with evaluating both literary and archaeological evidence and understand that ancient sources often present contrasting interpretations of the same events.

Pitch Up
How will we challenge ourselves?

Students will be expected to not just recount events, but to consider different perspectives by engaging in a wide range of Greek and Persian/Near East source material, as well as looking at architecture and art to discover how, and why, stories of the past have been told.
Students move beyond explaining events to evaluating the effectiveness of Darius' administration and Xerxes' leadership. They compare Greek and Persian perspectives, assess the reliability of royal inscriptions and literary accounts, and develop increasingly sophisticated historical judgements supported by carefully selected evidence. Students will also evaluate the causes of Persian success and failure, recognising that historical events rarely have a single explanation.

Wider Framework
How does this learning connect to future topics and bigger goals?

This enquiry develops students' understanding of how empires are governed, challenged and remembered, providing essential foundations for the later study of Alexander the Great, whose conquests brought an end to the Achaemenid Persian Empire. Students continue to strengthen the disciplinary skills of source evaluation, interpretation, analysis and historical judgement that underpin success throughout GCSE Ancient History and support progression to further study in History, Classics and related disciplines.

Curriculum Hinterland
What wider knowledge will deepen our understanding of this topic?

A GCSE in Ancient History enriches core content with myth, philosophy, archaeology, and cultural legacy, deepening understanding of ancient civilisations. It provides vital context, enhancing engagement, critical thinking, and appreciation of how the ancient world shaped modern society. Students broaden their understanding of the ancient world by exploring the geography of the Persian Empire, the significance of Persepolis, the Royal Road and Persian administrative systems. They examine the Behistun Inscription as one of the most important surviving royal inscriptions, investigate Persian architecture and royal symbolism, and consider how Herodotus shaped later perceptions of the Persian Wars. Students also

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	explore the long-term influence of Persian government, engineering and imperial organisation upon later civilisations.

Authentic connections

How does this topic connect to real life, careers, other subjects and important values?

Through this enquiry, students develop spiritual understanding by exploring how rulers used religion, ritual and divine authority to legitimise their power. Students consider the role of kingship within the Persian Empire and reflect on how belief, identity and leadership influenced the decisions of both rulers and ordinary people during periods of conflict and change.

Students develop social, moral and cultural understanding by examining how the Persian Empire governed diverse peoples across a vast territory. They investigate themes of leadership, responsibility, justice, imperial expansion and resistance whilst considering how Greek and Persian perspectives shaped different interpretations of the same historical events. Students also reflect on how bias and cultural identity influence the way history is recorded and remembered. Cross-curricular connections are made with Geography through the study of the geography of the Persian Empire, trade routes and the strategic importance of the Greek world, Religion and Worldviews through the exploration of kingship, divine authority and religious belief, English through analysing the language, purpose and reliability of ancient writers such as Herodotus, and Citizenship through discussions surrounding leadership, governance, conflict and political decision making.

Skills Builder

- Leadership – evaluating the qualities and decisions of rulers and considering how leadership influences the success of societies.
- Planning – organising historical evidence to construct well-supported explanations and extended judgements.
- Listening – considering contrasting viewpoints and responding thoughtfully to different historical interpretations.

Careers

- Historian
- Archivist
- Policy Advisor

Through this enquiry, students develop transferable skills in evaluating evidence, recognising bias, constructing balanced historical arguments, organising complex information and communicating reasoned judgements supported by historical evidence.

Resources

What books, websites, videos and materials will support our learning?

Teaching and learning throughout this enquiry are supported through a carefully selected range of primary and secondary sources designed to strengthen historical knowledge, develop disciplinary thinking and prepare students for OCR GCSE Ancient History.

Assessment

How will we show what we know, remember and can apply?

GCSE examination questions will be regularly assessed in this unit. This paper focus on Paper 1, which has a range of short recall, source analysis and essay questions. The first term will focus on the invasion of Greece by Xerxes. Students demonstrate their understanding by explaining the reigns of Darius and Xerxes, evaluating contrasting interpretations of the Persian Wars,

• Teacher modelling of source analysis, historical interpretations and examination responses. • OCR GCSE Ancient History Specification and past examination materials. • OCR Ancient History: Greece and Persia (Bloomsbury, Baddeley et al., 2023). • University of Warwick Ancient History resources: The Persian Empire, 559-465 • Prescribed ancient literary sources alongside archaeological evidence, inscriptions and artefacts. • Maps, timelines, royal family trees and visual reconstructions of the Persian Empire.	analysing literary and archaeological evidence and constructing supported historical judgements using accurate historical terminology. 50% Substantive Knowledge: Students demonstrate secure understanding of the accession of Darius, Persian administration, satrapies, taxation, the Royal Road, Persepolis, the reign of Xerxes, the causes and course of the Persian Wars and the significance of the major battles. 50% Disciplinary Knowledge: Students evaluate the provenance, purpose and limitations of ancient sources, compare literary and material evidence, analyse cause and consequence, assess historical significance, evaluate interpretations and construct evidence-based historical judgements.

Term 3 Topic	**Review of Ancient Persia/The Rise of Alexander the Great**

Big Picture
What are the main ideas and big questions in this topic?

Students complete any remaining study and assessment of the Persian Empire before beginning the OCR case study on Alexander the Great. This enquiry explores how a young king from Macedon conquered the largest empire of the ancient world and examines why Alexander remains one of history's most significant and debated military leaders.

Students investigate Alexander's upbringing, education and relationship with his father, Philip II, before exploring how these experiences shaped his leadership, ambitions and beliefs. They begin to consider the qualities required to lead an army, the importance of succession and legitimacy, and the influence of Greek culture upon Alexander's identity. Throughout the enquiry, students evaluate how ancient writers constructed Alexander's image and begin to ask broader historical questions about whether his success was the result of personal brilliance, careful preparation or circumstance.

Zoom In
What knowledge, skills and key vocabulary will we learn step by step?

The enquiry begins by introducing Alexander the Great, exploring his upbringing in Macedon, his education under Aristotle and the experiences that shaped his character as a future ruler. Students examine the political environment of the Macedonian royal court, considering how Alexander's early education, military training and exposure to Greek culture influenced his ambitions and leadership.

Teacher modelling explicitly supports students in analysing literary and historical evidence, demonstrating how historians compare ancient accounts to evaluate provenance, purpose and reliability. Students begin to recognise that much of what is known about Alexander was written long after his lifetime and that different authors present contrasting interpretations of his character and achievements.

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Substantive knowledge develops as students investigate Alexander's relationship with Philip II, considering succession, legitimacy and the tensions that existed within the Macedonian royal family. Attention then turns to Alexander's beliefs, including his admiration for Homeric heroes, his views on divine ancestry and the influence these beliefs had on his leadership and decision making. Students conclude the enquiry by examining Alexander's first experience of warfare at the Battle of Chaeronea, evaluating the tactics employed by Philip II and Alexander, the importance of the Macedonian phalanx and cavalry, and the significance of the battle in preparing Alexander for future conquest.

As the enquiry progresses, disciplinary knowledge develops alongside substantive knowledge. Students investigate cause and consequence by explaining how Alexander's upbringing and experiences prepared him for kingship. They examine change and continuity by considering what Philip established and how Alexander would later build upon these foundations. Students identify similarities and differences between Macedonian, Greek and Persian leadership, evaluate the significance of Alexander's early life and consider how historical interpretations have shaped his reputation. Through the careful analysis of literary evidence, students develop confidence in evaluating historical arguments, recognising bias and constructing balanced historical judgements supported by evidence.

Throughout the enquiry, students strengthen their historical thinking by recalling key people, events and developments, explaining why Alexander's early experiences mattered, analysing relationships between leadership, education and military success, evaluating historical arguments and interpreting ancient evidence critically. Students confidently apply subject-specific vocabulary including Macedon, Pella, Aristotle, Bucephalus, regent, noble, royal court, Philip II, heir, succession, legitimacy, dynasty, divine, destiny, Homeric, Battle of Chaeronea, phalanx, cavalry, tactics, infantry and flank.

The enquiry concludes by evaluating the extent to which Alexander's upbringing, education and early military experiences prepared him to become one of history's greatest military leaders.

Pre-Requisite Knowledge
What have we already learned that will help us with this topic?

Students build directly upon their understanding of the Persian Empire developed during the previous two enquiries. They understand how Persia became the dominant power in the ancient Near East and are familiar with concepts such as kingship, empire, legitimacy and succession. Students have also developed confidence in evaluating literary and archaeological evidence, recognising differing interpretations and constructing evidence-based historical judgements. Many students will also draw upon prior learning about Ancient Greece at Key Stage 2 or Key Stage 3, particularly Greek mythology, religion and culture.

Pitch Up
How will we challenge ourselves?

Students move beyond describing Alexander's early life to evaluating how far his later success can be explained by his upbringing, education and relationship with Philip II. They compare different ancient interpretations, assess the reliability of literary evidence and construct increasingly sophisticated historical judgements supported by carefully selected evidence.

Wider Framework
How does this learning connect to future topics and bigger goals?

This enquiry provides the essential foundation for studying Alexander's military campaigns, leadership and the conquest of the Persian Empire later in the course. Students continue to strengthen the disciplinary skills of source evaluation,

Curriculum Hinterland
What wider knowledge will deepen our understanding of this topic?

A GCSE in Ancient History enriches core content with myth, philosophy, archaeology, and cultural legacy, deepening understanding of ancient civilisations. It provides vital context, enhancing engagement, critical

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interpretation, analysis and historical judgement that underpin success throughout GCSE Ancient History whilst developing a deeper understanding of leadership, political change and the development of empires.	thinking, and appreciation of how the ancient world shaped modern society. Students enrich their understanding by exploring the geography of Macedon, the wider Greek world and the political relationships between the Greek city states. They investigate the influence of Aristotle, the importance of Homer's *Iliad*, the culture of the Macedonian royal court and modern debates surrounding Alexander's legacy. Students also consider how archaeology, sculpture, coins and later historical traditions continue to shape our understanding of Alexander today.

Authentic connections

How does this topic connect to real life, careers, other subjects and important values?

Through this enquiry, students develop spiritual understanding by exploring how Alexander's beliefs, identity and sense of destiny influenced his leadership and decision making. They reflect upon how belief systems, culture and personal values can shape individual actions and historical events. Students develop social, moral and cultural understanding by examining leadership, ambition, responsibility and succession within the Macedonian royal family. They consider how education, culture and personal relationships influence decision making whilst evaluating different perspectives on Alexander's character and achievements.

Cross-curricular connections are made with English through the study of Homeric literature and ancient biographies, Religion and Worldviews through the exploration of Greek religion, divine kingship and belief, Geography through the study of Macedon and the wider Greek world, and Citizenship through discussions surrounding leadership, governance and political succession.

Skills Builder

- Leadership – evaluating the qualities and decisions that prepare individuals to lead others.
- Creativity – exploring how different interpretations shape our understanding of historical figures.
- Speaking – presenting evidence-based historical arguments and defending balanced judgements.

Careers

- Military Historian
- Museum Curator
- University Researcher

Through this enquiry, students develop transferable skills in evaluating evidence, analysing competing interpretations, communicating well-supported arguments and critically assessing historical leadership.

Resources

What books, websites, videos and materials will support our learning?

Assessment

How will we show what we know, remember and can apply?

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Teaching and learning throughout this enquiry are supported through a carefully selected range of primary and secondary sources designed to strengthen historical knowledge, develop disciplinary thinking and prepare students for OCR GCSE Ancient History. • Teacher modelling of source analysis, historical interpretations and examination responses. • OCR GCSE Ancient History Specification and past examination materials. • OCR Ancient History: Greece and Persia (Bloomsbury, Baddeley et al., 2023). • University of Warwick Ancient History resources: The Persian Empire, 559-465 • Prescribed ancient literary sources alongside archaeological evidence, inscriptions and artefacts. • Maps, timelines, royal family trees and visual reconstructions of the Persian Empire.	GCSE examination questions will be regularly assessed in this unit. This paper focus on Paper 1, which has a range of short recall, source analysis and essay questions. Students demonstrate their understanding by explaining Alexander's upbringing and early life, evaluating differing interpretations of his character, analysing literary evidence and constructing supported historical judgements using accurate historical terminology. 50% Substantive Knowledge: Students demonstrate secure understanding of Alexander's upbringing, education, character, relationship with Philip II, beliefs, succession, the Battle of Chaeronea and the political development of Macedon. 50% Disciplinary Knowledge: Students evaluate the provenance, purpose and limitations of ancient literary sources, compare interpretations, analyse cause and consequence, assess historical significance and construct evidence-based historical judgements.

Term 4 Topic		**Alexander the Great**

Big Picture
What are the main ideas and big questions in this topic?

Alexander the Great was the king of Macedon who created one of the largest empires in the ancient world by conquering Persia and pushing east as far as India. His success came from strong leadership, fast-moving cavalry, and the loyalty of his army, which helped him win major battles like Granicus, Issus, and Gaugamela. The OCR GCSE case study also looks at how Alexander ruled his empire, including the spread of Greek culture and his use of local customs to hold power. Historians study him as both a brilliant military commander and a controversial ruler, so the topic is about judging his achievements and legacy.

Zoom In
What knowledge, skills and key vocabulary will we learn step by step?

The enquiry begins by examining Alexander's accession to the Macedonian throne following the assassination of Philip II. Students investigate the challenges Alexander faced in securing his position before analysing his preparations for the invasion of the Persian Empire. Teacher modelling explicitly supports students in interpreting literary and archaeological evidence, demonstrating how historians compare ancient writers such as Arrian, Plutarch and Diodorus Siculus to evaluate provenance, purpose, reliability and historical value.

Substantive knowledge develops through the study of Alexander's major military campaigns, including the Battle of the Granicus, Battle of Issus and the decisive Battle of Gaugamela. Students examine Alexander's use of the Macedonian phalanx, Companion Cavalry, battlefield tactics and leadership, evaluating how these

contributed to repeated military success against the Persian Empire. Attention then turns to the sieges of Tyre and Gaza, the conquest of Egypt, the foundation of Alexandria and Alexander's march into the heart of the Persian Empire.

As the enquiry progresses, students investigate Alexander's government of his empire, including his adoption of Persian customs, the policy of fusion, the marriages at Susa, the role of satraps and the spread of Hellenistic culture throughout the conquered territories. Students evaluate the effectiveness of Alexander's leadership, considering the opposition he faced from both Macedonian nobles and conquered peoples, before examining the circumstances surrounding his death and the fragmentation of his empire.

Disciplinary knowledge develops alongside substantive knowledge. Students investigate cause and consequence by explaining why Alexander achieved such rapid military success and assessing the long-term impact of his conquests. They explore change and continuity by considering how Alexander adopted aspects of Persian government whilst introducing Greek ideas and culture. Students identify similarities and differences between Macedonian and Persian systems of rule, evaluate the significance of Alexander's achievements and examine how historical interpretations of his leadership have changed over time. Through increasingly sophisticated analysis of literary and archaeological evidence, students strengthen their ability to question historical narratives, evaluate competing arguments and construct balanced historical judgements supported by evidence.

Throughout the enquiry, students continue to develop their historical thinking by strengthening their recall of key battles, individuals and developments, explaining why events occurred and why they mattered, analysing military strategy and political leadership, evaluating historical arguments and critically interpreting ancient evidence. Students confidently apply subject-specific vocabulary including Hellenistic, satrap, phalanx, Companion Cavalry, siege, logistics, strategy, tactics, empire, assimilation, fusion, Alexandria, Gaugamela, Issus, Granicus, proskynesis, succession, legacy, interpretation, provenance and significance.

The enquiry concludes by evaluating the extent to which Alexander deserves his title of "Alexander the Great", considering both his military achievements and the lasting political, cultural and historical legacy of his empire.

Pre-Requisite Knowledge *What have we already learned that will help us with this topic?*	**Pitch Up** *How will we challenge ourselves?*
Students build directly upon their understanding of the Persian Empire and Alexander's upbringing developed throughout the previous enquiries. They already understand the strengths and weaknesses of Persian government, the leadership of Cyrus, Darius and Xerxes, and the political and military foundations established by Philip II. Students have developed confidence in evaluating literary and archaeological evidence and are increasingly able to compare differing historical interpretations to construct evidence-based judgements.	Students will be expected to not just recount events, but to consider different perspectives by engaging in a wide range of Greek and Persian/Near East source material, as well as looking at architecture and art to discover how, and why, stories of the past have been told. Students move beyond describing Alexander's campaigns to evaluating the reasons for his military success and the effectiveness of his rule. They assess conflicting ancient interpretations, compare Greek and Persian perspectives and develop increasingly sophisticated historical judgements about Alexander's achievements, failures and long-term legacy.

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Wider Framework
How does this learning connect to future topics and bigger goals?

This enquiry completes the Year 10 study of Greece and Persia whilst providing strong conceptual foundations for Year 11, where students investigate the political struggles of the Late Roman Republic and the reign of Cleopatra. Students continue to strengthen the disciplinary skills of historical interpretation, source evaluation, analysis and judgement that underpin success throughout GCSE Ancient History and prepare them for further study in History, Classics and related disciplines.

Curriculum Hinterland
What wider knowledge will deepen our understanding of this topic?

A GCSE in Ancient History enriches core content with myth, philosophy, archaeology, and cultural legacy, deepening understanding of ancient civilisations. It provides vital context, enhancing engagement, critical thinking, and appreciation of how the ancient world shaped modern society. Students broaden their understanding by exploring the geography of Alexander's empire, the cities he founded, the development of the Hellenistic world and the cultural exchange that followed his conquests. They investigate archaeological discoveries from Alexandria, Persepolis and Babylon, examine the influence of Greek philosophy, science and art throughout the eastern Mediterranean and consider how Alexander's legacy has been interpreted by historians, filmmakers and modern political leaders.

Authentic connections
How does this topic connect to real life, careers, other subjects and important values?

Through this enquiry, students develop spiritual understanding by exploring how Alexander's beliefs, ambition and understanding of kingship shaped his leadership and influenced his treatment of conquered peoples. They reflect on the relationship between personal values, identity and the exercise of power.

Students develop social, moral and cultural understanding by examining the consequences of conquest, cultural exchange and empire. They consider the ethical implications of military expansion, the challenges of governing diverse societies and the ways in which different cultures can influence and enrich one another.

Cross-curricular connections are made with Geography through the study of Alexander's route across Asia, English through analysing ancient biographies and literary sources, Religion and Worldviews through the exploration of Greek, Egyptian and Persian beliefs, and Citizenship through discussions surrounding leadership, governance, conflict and cultural diversity.

Skills Builder

- Problem Solving – evaluating military decisions and explaining why particular strategies succeeded.
- Planning – organising historical evidence to construct sustained explanations and balanced judgements.
- Adapting – analysing how Alexander modified his leadership and government across different cultures.

Careers

- Archaeologist

- Military Historian
- Heritage Manager

Through this enquiry, students develop transferable skills in analysing evidence, evaluating competing interpretations, making balanced judgements, communicating persuasive arguments and understanding the complexity of leadership and cultural interaction.

Resources *What books, websites, videos and materials will support our learning?*	**Assessment** *How will we show what we know, remember and can apply?*
Teaching and learning throughout this enquiry are supported through a carefully selected range of primary and secondary sources designed to strengthen historical knowledge, develop disciplinary thinking and prepare students for OCR GCSE Ancient History. • Teacher modelling of source analysis, historical interpretations and examination responses. • OCR GCSE Ancient History Specification and past examination materials. • OCR Ancient History: Greece and Persia (Bloomsbury, Baddeley et al., 2023). • University of Warwick Ancient History resources. • Prescribed literary sources, including Arrian, Plutarch, Diodorus Siculus and Curtius Rufus, alongside archaeological evidence, coins and inscriptions. • Maps of Alexander's campaigns, battle reconstructions, timelines and visual source material. • Retrieval practice, vocabulary activities and examination-style questions.	Students demonstrate their understanding by explaining Alexander's campaigns and leadership, evaluating differing interpretations of his achievements, analysing literary and archaeological evidence and constructing supported historical judgements using accurate historical terminology. 50% Substantive Knowledge: Students demonstrate secure understanding of Alexander's accession, military campaigns, major battles, conquest of Persia, government of the empire, spread of Hellenistic culture, death and legacy. 50% Disciplinary Knowledge: Students evaluate the provenance, purpose and limitations of literary and archaeological evidence, compare interpretations, analyse cause and consequence, assess historical significance and construct evidence-based historical judgements.

Term 5 Topic	**Synoptic Review: Persia and Alexander**

Big Picture
What are the main ideas and big questions in this topic?

New Line Learning Academy
Believe and Achieve

This enquiry provides students with the opportunity to consolidate and deepen their understanding of the OCR GCSE Ancient History Paper 1 content by drawing together their learning about the Persian Empire and Alexander the Great. Rather than introducing significant new substantive knowledge, students revisit the major themes, events and individuals studied throughout Year 10, strengthening their ability to make connections across different enquiries and develop increasingly sophisticated historical judgements.

Students compare the leadership of Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius, Xerxes and Alexander, evaluating how empires were established, maintained and ultimately transformed. Through revisiting literary and archaeological evidence, students refine their understanding of historical interpretations whilst preparing for GCSE examination questions that require secure knowledge, careful source evaluation and balanced judgement. The enquiry concludes by bridging students into the study of Republican Rome, encouraging them to recognise both continuity and change across the ancient Mediterranean world.

Zoom In
What knowledge, skills and key vocabulary will we learn step by step?

The enquiry begins by revisiting the development of the Achaemenid Persian Empire, consolidating students' understanding of the reigns of Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius and Xerxes. Students compare the achievements, challenges and leadership styles of each ruler, identifying how the empire expanded, was administered and came into conflict with the Greek world. Teacher modelling explicitly supports students in revisiting historical arguments and examination responses, demonstrating how evidence from literary sources, inscriptions and archaeology can be combined to construct convincing historical explanations.

Attention then turns to Alexander the Great, revisiting his upbringing, military campaigns, leadership and the creation of his empire. Students compare Alexander's achievements with those of the Persian kings, evaluating why his campaigns proved successful and considering the extent to which his empire represented continuity or change. Through structured retrieval practice, comparative activities and examination-style questions, students develop increasingly secure knowledge across the entire Paper 1 specification.

As the enquiry progresses, disciplinary knowledge is strengthened through synoptic thinking. Students revisit cause and consequence by explaining why empires rise and fall, change and continuity by evaluating developments in leadership, administration and warfare, similarity and difference by comparing rulers, military systems and methods of government, and historical significance by judging the impact of key individuals on the ancient world. Students continue to refine their understanding of historical interpretations, recognising how Greek, Persian and modern historians may present contrasting perspectives of the same events.

Throughout the enquiry, students strengthen their historical thinking by recalling substantive knowledge accurately, applying historical vocabulary confidently, analysing evidence critically and constructing balanced historical judgements supported by precise examples. Vocabulary from across the Paper 1 specification is revisited and embedded naturally, including empire, satrap, succession, legitimacy, phalanx, cavalry, Hellenistic, conquest, interpretation, provenance, significance, continuity, consequence, governance, strategy and legacy.

The enquiry concludes by preparing students for the transition to the Roman Republic, ensuring that their understanding of Persia and Alexander is secure before beginning a new historical narrative.

Pre-Requisite Knowledge
What have we already learned that will help us with this topic?

Pitch Up
How will we challenge ourselves?

New Line Learning Academy
Believe and Achieve

Students draw upon the entirety of their Year 10 study of the Persian Empire and Alexander the Great. They have developed secure substantive knowledge of key rulers, battles, political developments and historical debates, alongside disciplinary skills including source analysis, interpretation, historical explanation and evaluation.	Students are expected to move beyond recalling individual events by making connections across the entire Paper 1 specification. They synthesise knowledge from multiple enquiries, compare rulers and empires, evaluate competing historical interpretations and construct sophisticated, evidence-based judgements using GCSE examination criteria.
Wider Framework *How does this learning connect to future topics and bigger goals?*	**Curriculum Hinterland** *What wider knowledge will deepen our understanding of this topic?*
This enquiry completes students' preparation for OCR Paper 1 whilst providing a conceptual bridge into the study of the Roman Republic. Students strengthen the retrieval, analytical and evaluative skills that underpin success throughout GCSE Ancient History and prepare for increasingly complex historical comparisons as they begin Paper 2.	Students deepen their understanding by exploring the lasting influence of the Persian Empire and Alexander's conquests on later civilisations, particularly Rome. They investigate how Hellenistic culture spread throughout the eastern Mediterranean and consider how archaeological discoveries, museum collections and modern historical research continue to reshape interpretations of the ancient world.

Authentic connections
How does this topic connect to real life, careers, other subjects and important values?

Through this synoptic enquiry, students reflect on the qualities that define successful leadership and consider how ambition, belief, identity and personal values shaped the decisions of rulers across the ancient world. By revisiting the achievements and failures of both the Persian kings and Alexander the Great, students explore how individual choices can alter the course of history and influence generations long after a leader's lifetime.

Students develop social understanding by comparing how different empires governed diverse populations, maintained order and responded to conflict. Moral understanding is strengthened through evaluating the ethics of conquest, imperial expansion and political power, encouraging students to consider the responsibilities that accompany leadership. Cultural understanding is deepened through exploring the interaction between Persian, Greek and Macedonian societies, recognising how cultural exchange, trade and migration shaped the Hellenistic world and continue to influence modern civilisation.

The enquiry has strong links with English, where students analyse literary texts, evaluate the viewpoints of different authors and construct well-supported written arguments. Connections with Geography are developed through studying the physical geography of the Mediterranean, the Near East and the routes taken during imperial expansion. Students build upon learning in Religion and Worldviews by exploring kingship, divine authority and the role of religion in shaping political leadership. Links with Citizenship encourage students to evaluate different systems of government, leadership and decision making, while Politics provides opportunities to compare ancient empires with modern states and global powers.

Skills Builder

- Listening – evaluating different historical interpretations and considering alternative viewpoints before reaching balanced judgements.

New Line Learning Academy
Believe and Achieve

- Leadership – analysing the qualities demonstrated by successful and unsuccessful rulers and reflecting on effective leadership in different contexts.
- Creativity – making connections across the entire Paper 1 specification and constructing original, well-supported historical arguments.

- Political Analyst – evaluating leadership, governance and decision making across different societies.
- Archivist – preserving, organising and interpreting historical records and documents.
- International Relations Specialist – applying knowledge of diplomacy, conflict and cultural interaction to understand relationships between nations.

Resources
What books, websites, videos and materials will support our learning?

Teaching and learning throughout this enquiry are supported through a carefully selected range of primary and secondary sources designed to strengthen historical knowledge, develop disciplinary thinking and prepare students for OCR GCSE Ancient History.

- Teacher modelling of source analysis, historical interpretations and examination responses.
- OCR GCSE Ancient History Specification and past examination materials.
- OCR Ancient History: Greece and Persia (Bloomsbury, Baddeley et al., 2023).
- University of Warwick Ancient History resources.
- Prescribed literary sources, including Arrian, Plutarch, Diodorus Siculus and Curtius Rufus, alongside archaeological evidence, coins and inscriptions.
- Maps of Alexander's campaigns, battle reconstructions, timelines and visual source material.
- Retrieval practice, vocabulary activities and examination-style questions.

Assessment
How will we show what we know, remember and can apply?

Assessment throughout this enquiry focuses upon retrieval, synthesis and examination readiness. Students demonstrate their understanding through source analysis, comparative essays, extended historical judgements and GCSE examination-style questions that require knowledge drawn from across the entire Paper 1 specification.

50% Substantive Knowledge
Students demonstrate secure understanding of the Persian rulers, Alexander the Great, the development and decline of the Persian Empire, Alexander's conquests and the significance of their leadership and legacy.
50% Disciplinary Knowledge
Students evaluate literary and archaeological evidence, compare historical interpretations, analyse cause and consequence, identify continuity and change, assess historical significance and construct balanced, evidence-based historical judgements using appropriate historical terminology.

Term 6
Topic

Origins of the Roman Republic

Big Picture
What are the main ideas and big questions in this topic?

New Line Learning Academy
Believe and Achieve

This enquiry introduces students to the origins of the Roman Republic, exploring how a small settlement on the banks of the River Tiber developed into a powerful republic that would eventually dominate the Mediterranean world. Students investigate the blend of myth, legend and historical evidence surrounding Rome's foundation before examining how the overthrow of the Roman monarchy transformed political power and shaped one of history's most influential civilisations.

Throughout the enquiry, students explore the development of Roman government, citizenship and society, asking how power was shared, who benefited from the Republic and why Roman political institutions proved so successful. Students begin to consider how historians distinguish between myth and history, recognising that stories such as Romulus and Remus continue to shape our understanding of Rome despite the limited evidence available.

Zoom In
What knowledge, skills and key vocabulary will we learn step by step?

The enquiry begins by exploring the legendary foundations of Rome through the stories of Aeneas, Romulus and Remus and the influence of the Etruscans. Students investigate how mythology and archaeology combine to shape our understanding of Rome's origins, recognising that historians must carefully evaluate different forms of evidence when reconstructing the ancient past. Teacher modelling explicitly supports students in comparing literary traditions with archaeological discoveries, demonstrating how provenance, purpose and historical context influence the reliability of evidence.

Substantive knowledge develops as students examine the rule of the Seven Kings of Rome, focusing particularly on the later Etruscan kings and the political developments that laid the foundations for the Republic. Attention then turns to the reign of Tarquinius Superbus, analysing the events surrounding the overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment of the Roman Republic. Students investigate the changing balance of power between patricians and plebeians, exploring how Roman political institutions developed and how the offices of consuls, the Senate and the popular assemblies attempted to prevent the return of tyranny.

As the enquiry progresses, disciplinary knowledge develops alongside substantive knowledge. Students investigate cause and consequence by explaining why the monarchy was overthrown and how this transformed Roman government. They explore change and continuity by identifying what remained from the monarchy and what fundamentally changed within the Republic. Students examine similarity and difference by comparing Roman and Greek political systems, evaluate the significance of the Republic's creation and consider how historical interpretations of Rome's foundation differ depending on whether historians prioritise literary evidence or archaeological discoveries.

Throughout the enquiry, students strengthen their historical thinking by recalling key events, analysing the development of Roman institutions, evaluating competing interpretations and constructing balanced historical arguments supported by evidence. Students confidently apply subject-specific vocabulary including Republic, monarchy, consul, Senate, patrician, plebeian, citizen, magistrate, assembly, veto, tyranny, Etruscan, Forum, mythology, archaeology, interpretation, provenance and constitution.

The enquiry concludes by evaluating why the establishment of the Roman Republic became one of the most significant political developments in the ancient world and how its institutions influenced later societies.

Pre-Requisite Knowledge
What have we already learned that will help us with this topic?

Pitch Up
How will we challenge ourselves?

New Line Learning Academy
Believe and Achieve

Students draw upon their understanding of monarchy, empire and leadership developed through their study of Persia and Alexander the Great. They have experience of evaluating literary and archaeological evidence, recognising historical interpretations and constructing evidence-based historical judgements. Knowledge of Greek mythology and civilisation studied earlier in their education also provides useful context for understanding Roman legends and cultural influences.

Students move beyond simply recounting the stories of Rome's foundation by evaluating the historical reliability of myths, comparing literary and archaeological evidence and judging the significance of the Roman Republic as a turning point in political history. They will develop increasingly sophisticated historical arguments by synthesising different types of evidence and recognising the complexity of historical interpretation.

Wider Framework

How does this learning connect to future topics and bigger goals?

This enquiry establishes the essential foundations for the remainder of the OCR Roman Republic course. Understanding the origins of Rome, the development of republican government and the structure of Roman society enables students to explain later political conflicts, constitutional crises and the eventual rise of powerful individuals such as Julius Caesar and Cleopatra. The enquiry also continues to strengthen the analytical, evaluative and interpretative skills required throughout GCSE Ancient History.

Curriculum Hinterland

What wider knowledge will deepen our understanding of this topic?

Students enrich their understanding by exploring the geography of central Italy, the influence of the Etruscans and neighbouring Greek colonies, and the development of Roman engineering, religion and urban planning. They investigate archaeological discoveries from the Roman Forum, the Palatine Hill and early Roman settlements, considering how modern excavations continue to reshape historians' understanding of Rome's earliest history.

Authentic connections

How does this topic connect to real life, careers, other subjects and important values?

Through this enquiry, students reflect on how myths, traditions and shared stories contribute to national identity and cultural heritage. They consider why societies create foundation stories and how beliefs about origins can influence values, leadership and a sense of belonging across generations.

Students develop social understanding by exploring how Roman society was organised and how different groups experienced power and citizenship within the early Republic. Moral understanding is developed through evaluating the removal of tyranny, the creation of shared government and the challenges of creating a fair political system. Cultural understanding is strengthened by investigating the influence of Etruscan and Greek civilisation on Rome and recognising how ideas, traditions and institutions spread between societies.

The enquiry has strong links with English through the study of Roman myths, legends and classical literature. Connections with Politics and Citizenship enable students to compare the Roman Republic with modern democratic systems, exploring constitutions, representation and the separation of powers. Students also build upon learning in Religion and Worldviews by investigating Roman religion, rituals and the relationship between belief and political authority, whilst Geography supports understanding of the physical landscape that influenced Rome's early development.

Skills Builder

- Adapting – evaluating new evidence and modifying historical interpretations as understanding develops.

- Planning – organising evidence from literary and archaeological sources to construct coherent historical arguments.
- Problem Solving – investigating how the Romans attempted to prevent the return of monarchy through new political institutions.

Careers

- Constitutional Lawyer – examining the development of legal and political systems.
- Urban Archaeologist – investigating the origins and development of ancient cities.
- Historic Environment Advisor – protecting and interpreting important archaeological and heritage sites.

Students develop transferable skills in evaluating evidence, recognising bias, comparing different viewpoints and constructing well-reasoned arguments. They also strengthen their understanding of political systems, civic responsibility and the ways in which historical developments continue to influence modern governments, legal systems and democratic institutions.

Resources
What books, websites, videos and materials will support our learning?

Teaching and learning throughout this enquiry are supported through a carefully selected range of primary and secondary sources designed to strengthen historical knowledge, develop disciplinary thinking and prepare students for OCR GCSE Ancient History.

- Teacher modelling of source analysis, historical interpretations and examination responses.
- OCR GCSE Ancient History Specification and past examination materials.
- OCR Ancient History: Roman Republic and the Reign of Augustus (Bloomsbury).
- University of Warwick Ancient History resources.
- Prescribed literary sources including Livy, Dionysius of Halicarnassus and archaeological evidence from early Rome.
- Maps of early Italy, timelines, family trees, reconstructions of the Roman Forum and Palatine Hill.
- Retrieval practice, vocabulary activities and examination-style questions.

Assessment
How will we show what we know, remember and can apply?

Assessment takes place throughout the enquiry through retrieval practice, source analysis, structured questioning, examination-style responses and extended historical writing. Students demonstrate their understanding by explaining the origins of Rome, evaluating the reliability of foundation myths, analysing the development of republican government and constructing balanced historical judgements supported by accurate historical evidence.

50% Substantive Knowledge: Students demonstrate secure understanding of the foundation legends of Rome, the Seven Kings, the Etruscans, the overthrow of the monarchy, the creation of the Roman Republic and the development of early Roman political institutions.

50% Disciplinary Knowledge: Students evaluate literary and archaeological evidence, compare historical interpretations, analyse cause and consequence, assess historical significance and construct evidence-based historical judgements using appropriate historical terminology.