



Answer Sheet

Activity 1 – The Greek Sources

Task 1

There is lots to comment on here. In terms of strengths, you may mention e.g. that Herodotus travelled widely, and so was able to access information from lots of different sources. In terms of weaknesses, you may comment on the fact that Herodotus was a storyteller rather than a historian in the modern sense of the word, and the way that he tells his story can influence the way that he presents his facts. Similarly, for all he seems to have used a wide array of sources, it is often unclear who he got information from and, consequently, we cannot always assess the reliability of his sources.

Task 2

The key thing here is to find a way to represent different statuses visually – differing heights is the most obvious way of doing this.

Bonus Task

Leonidas describes how the Persian messenger has brought ‘the crowns and heads of conquered kings’ to his city; emphasises that the Persian Empire was created through force. He goes on to claim that the messenger threatens the Spartan people with ‘slavery and death’ – this articulates a common ancient Greek claim that the Persian Empire was inhabited by miserable peoples who were all slaves to the Persian king.

Activity 2

The Persian and the Scythians are identifiable because of their different styles of dress – most obviously, they wear very different hats. This use of stereotypical national dress was a really important part of Persian artwork (and is still common today!) because it enabled the kings to display just how varied (and thus how big) their empire was – even if you couldn’t read, you could still tell that the empire was incredibly diverse.

The Persian at the front is the same height as the Scythians behind; this implies that they enjoy equal status – the king does not view the Persians as more special than any of the other people in his empire. This is also suggested by the very similar depictions of the Persians and the Scythians. All of the figures are free-standing and upright, the Scythians are also not chained up in any way. This suggests that the Scythians are not oppressed by the Persians.

The Scythians are all armed and this suggests lots of things. Firstly, they are apparently trusted to bear arms in the presence of the king – the king clearly isn’t worried about being attacked, and this suggests that he thinks that he is popular with his subjects. Secondly, the Scythians seem to have no intention of using their weapons. Given that weapons are used to defend yourself when you feel threatened or somebody attempts to get you to do something that you don’t want to, this suggests that the Scythians are happy to give tribute to the king; the Scythians in this scene are acting willingly. The tribute that they bring comprises golden bracelets, fine clothes, and a horse – all expensive items. When we willingly give somebody



something expensive, we might describe the item as a gift or a present. We normally give presents only to people that we like, so the central message here is that the king is popular with his subjects. There is also no hint that the Scythians are being forced to do any of this – so this image suggests that the king does not rule by force; the people of the empire are happy to be ruled by the Persian king.

Activity 3

Question 1

The king stands on top of a platform which is carried by the subjects (who are pictured at the bottom). All of the subjects stand in the 'Atlas Pose', with their palms pressed up on the platform – we could say that they 'carry' the king, therefore, but another word we might use is 'support'; in this image, the peoples of the empire physically support the king. Additionally, the arms of the figures are inter-linked, suggesting that they work together to support the king. All of the subjects are the same height, implying that they are all equal. We can tell that the figures represent subjects from different parts of the empire because they are all dressed differently. All of the subjects stand tall – their backs are straight – and this suggests that they are not buckling under the weight of the king, implying that he is light rather than heavy. Translating this out of symbolic language, the message is that the king does not demand too much from his people.

Question 2

The themes expressed in this image complement the messages communicated in the Persepolis Tribute Frieze. Just as the Scythians at Persepolis brought material goods to the king (and so could be said to support the king), here the king is very obviously carried by his people. The subjects stand tall, just as they do on the Persepolis Frieze, and in both images this suggests that they are well-treated and not down-trodden. Here, the people of the empire support the king and, in the Persepolis Frieze, we saw that they were shown as behaving willingly – combining the two images, therefore, creates a world in which the people of the empire support king willingly (which suggests that he is popular) and it is also apparent that no one country suffers under the weight of the king, rather, the countries of the empire work together to ensure that the king is held aloft in his rightful position of importance, whilst the countries themselves remain prosperous.

Question 3

There are lots of different potential audiences:

- People living at the time and within the empire (an internal audience)
- People living at the time but outside of the empire (an external audience)
- Future generations
- The gods

There are plausible arguments in favour of all of these:

- External audience: a positive image might encourage other people living outside of the empire to want to join the Persian Empire
- Future generations: the Persian kings might want to be remembered in a positive light



- Gods: Treating people well might result in the kings being viewed favourably by the gods, thus ensuring a happy afterlife.

But the most persuasive target audience is an internal audience:

- Anybody who was thinking about rebelling against the king but who saw these images would come away thinking that, although they may be unhappy, the king would be able to call on numerous peoples – all of whom supported him – in the event of a rebellion. This would result in the king having a massive military advantage, thus rendering the rebellion doomed to failure.
- Equally, if you were unhappy, but believed everybody else within the empire to be perfectly at ease with the situation, you may re-evaluate your own position.

Ultimately, then, this material was designed to ensure that the Persian Empire remained at peace. But why did the Persians take this approach, which suggested that the empire survived because the king was popular amongst his subjects, when every single earlier empire had emphasised rule by force only? The most plausible suggestion is that the size of the Persian Empire demanded a new approach. Empires like Egypt were much smaller than the Persian Empire – which stretched from India to Greece. In these smaller empires, the king plausibly could keep the peace with his army and quickly react to any rebellion. But marching an army from Iran to Egypt, or from Turkey to Afghanistan would take months, and a rebellious force would have time to prepare for an attempt at re-conquest, making it harder for the Persians to put down any rebellions. Consequently, the Persians had to try and find a new way to keep the peace.