Please note:

This response was developed against the 2017 Subject Outline and has been remarked against the criteria for 2018.

Stage 2 Ancient Studies

Assessment Type 3: Inquiry

To what extent was marriage another form of restriction to women in Ancient Rome?

In ancient Roman society, the marital status available to women provided many restrictions amongst their lives. Whilst men formed the majority of the citizens, the women played an essential part in providing comfort within the household. Women were known to have three components during their life; before marriage, during marriage and in some circumstances such as divorce or a spouses death, after marriage. All three stages helped construct the women to provide for their primary role of bearing children and managing the household (Shelton, 1988). However, whilst the stages might prepare the women for their Roman home life, they also came with strict limitations, in which the majority revolved around the male citizens. Furthermore, the incorporation of Vestal Virgins into the ancient Roman society provided an alternate cult like opportunity for a woman's life growing up. Through this, the roman society provided a range of both restrictions and liberty relating to the marital status for women.

It was clearly evident that typical Roman girls grew up restricted due to the social class which that had been born in to and *endured many social, legal and political handicaps from birth (Bunsen, 2002,* <http://www.fofweb.com/activelink2.asp?ItemID=WE40&iPin=Ere2036&SingleRecord=True>) Just like other ancient societies, most women grew up with the limitation of education. In Ancient Rome, all brothers and sisters were initially educated at home together. As the children grew older, it became clear that men received a better education than girls, however, women were still well educated to fulfill their requirements around the household (Toner, 2010). It was assumed that the young Roman girls took part in some exercise for leisure resulting in gentle ball games than what the men would play (Balsdon, 1969). Women were restricted to education that saw them *striving for excellence in those qualities that best served the interest of the family* (Shelton, 1988, pg 291) Girls were raised by their mothers, but had little say about their relationship (Matyszak, 2007) because a girl *was under complete power of her father* (Bunsen, 2002, [http://www.fofweb.com/activelink2.asp?ItemID=WE408thPin–Ere2036&S ingleRecord=True](http://www.fofweb.com/activelink2.asp?ItemID=WE408thPin–Ere2036&S%20ingleRecord=True)).

Roman parents held and maintained a *strict discipline when raising children* as they were always warned by Playwright Essayist and courtier Seneca the Younger, *that too much codling will spoil a child* (Seneca, 1988, pg 31-32) and *for the child who has been denied nothing, whose tears an anxious mother dried, this child will be unable to cope with the harsh realities of life* (Seneca, 1988, pg 31-32). Due to this warning, parents restricted children, by not spoiling them with luxury.

During their childhood, girls were prepared for life as a married woman, knowing that they will be married, most likely, by the age of 15 (Balsdon, 1969). For the women, it was more of a *specular* event as the daughters are taken away from their mothers, who they are under surveillance by until the day of her marriage (Balsdon, 1969). There was pressure on both sexes to marry, especially on

the need to allow the girls reproducing quickly, resulting in a younger marriage (Dunpont, 1993). Roman women could not chose their own husbands, nor could they chose if they wanted to many or remain single because *many Roman marriages were arranged by fathers, uncles or other relatives* (Pliny the Younger, 1969, pg 47-48) For young single girls, who had reached the legal age of 12 and had entered puberty (Gardner, 1986), it was their duty to marry the man chosen for her by her parents (Shelton, 1988). Many believed that if a girl wished to remain single, she would be considered an *undesirable burden to her family* (Shelton, 1988, pg 291) According to a poem by Catullus, *it is no right to reject the man to whom your father and mother gave you. You must obey them...Don't fight against your parents who have surrendered to your husband a dowry and their rights over you* (Shelton, 1988, pg 291) This passage from the poem explores how disrespectful it was for a young girl to disobey her parents matrimonial wishes. As the late republic and early empire hit, Rome changed as fathers could no longer force any son or daughter to marry unwillingly (Balsdon, 1969).

The restrictions of a woman in ancient Rome, furthered to limit their lifestyle once she is wed to the man which her parents selected. Both private, within the home, and public, outside the home restrictions were evident throughout the era. Once married, the woman's guardianship transfers to her husband as she became Manu (Bunsen, 2002). Manu, in the republic, meant subject to authority resulting in a *legal subjugation to her husband* (Bunsen, 2002, [http://www.fofweb .com/activelink2asp?ItemID=WE40&iPin=Ere2036&SingIeRecord=True](http://www.fofweb.com/activelink2asp?ItemID=WE40&iPin=Ere2036&SingIeRecord=True)) therefore, authority to act must be obtained or vested in a man (Gardner, 1986). Married women were limited to a domestic sphere where they would go about their daily household routines in the best interest of the family (Shelton, 1988). One of a woman's primary roles was to manage a household, therefore, restricting her to general household activities such as the *production and preservation of food* and, *cleaning, mending and washing* (Matyszak, 2007, pg 120) all too satisfy her husband. All of these duties must have been completed by midday in time for lunch, prandium (Balsdon, 1969), where both the husband and wife would enjoy a meal together (Balsdon, 1969). One of the main expectations of a Roman wife was to remain loyal to her husband and not betray him (Dupont, 1993). Despite many loving and faithful marriages, adultery was as common in ancient rome as it is in modern society. It has been said that if a man found his wife being unfaithful and is caught in bed with another man, he could kill his wife and their children with consultation of a family council (Balsdon, 1969). This act of violence exposes the necessity of loyalty within the household because *although many roman marriages were arranged, husbands and wives often developed respectful and loving relationships* (Shelton, 1988, pg 291). Whilst it may convey the idea of obedience in their relationship, the Roman society also explores that women are restricted by their home life.

A female's life was very controlled by her husband or the male society in a public sense throughout Ancient Rome. One of the most simplistic restrictions was having men control the female bathing time which would only occur from dawn to the seventh hour of the day (Balsdon, 1969). On the rare occasions when women were not excluded from all forms of public life, women were expected to stay covered up (Dupont, 1993). The stola, a short sleeved, V-neck, tube dress, was the most respectable piece of clothing which a woman could wear when out of the house, especially during the late republic. Similarly, whilst out in public, women must not behave badly as *the sins of women reflect disgrace not only on their husbands, but also upon their children whose honour suffers all the more because of their natural likeness to their mothers* (Procopius, Unknown, <http://fofweb.com/activelink2.asp?Item1D>—WE49&iPin=amdoc131&SingleRecord=True) It was during times of crisis and loss where a woman was *duty bound to weep and wail in public* (Toner, 2010, pg 257). As grief was often seen as a woman's task, she would have to *execute compassion for herself and children* (Toner, 2010, pg 257). Due to the other restrictions of the Roman society, wives were found to be *avid for showing the slightest sign of affection* (Toner, 2010, pg 257). With that being said, it was another expectation for women to correctly manage their feelings to generate appropriate public display. The emotions produced in public all benefited and reflected her husbands status quo if she upholds the loyalty expected as a Roman wife (Toner, 2010).

There were very few female citizens that were allowed to defend themselves if something seized to their relationship such a divorce or a death.- For many new relationships, a divorce usually followed the return of her husband from service (Balsdon, 1969). In Ancient Rome, *As marriage was based on consent, the will of either of the consenting parties in free marriage to renounce it sufficed* (Dupont, 1993, pg354), therefore, divorce lacked complexity throughout the classical era (Gardner, 1986). Unfortunately, if a relationship including children were to concede a divorce, the mother would lose her rights to her children as they must be under authority of a male (Shelton, 1988). Furthermore, widowhood was also quite common throughout classical Rome. It was seen that *Marriages of such long duration, not dissolved by divorce but terminated by death alone are indeed rare* (Lewis & Reinhold, 1966, pg 485-487). Widowhood had an impact on a woman's life immensely as it destroyed her social status and source of income (Matyszak, 2007). For some cases of widowhood, if a child was born after a woman was widowed, it was vital to have their legitimacy established (Gardner, 1986). For all women who were unfortunate to experience a divorce or widowhood, re-marriage was essential. In Ancient Rome, society gave two years for a woman to re­marry if her husband dies (Balsdon, 1969) and only eighteen months to re-marry if she had gone through a divorce (Balsdon, 1969). Re-marriage was a crucial option to those widowed or divorced and still in younger years (D'ambro, Unknown). Through this life after marriage it can only provide restrictions on a woman, especially as females understand that after a divorce or death, marriage is still essential, continuing the marital restrictions.

The Vestal Virgins in Ancient Roman society explore the idea that women can have the opportunity to escape marital restrictions yet participate in a community which had limitations of its own. As a group formed of four to six girls who *be no less than six and no more than 10 years old* (Aulus Gellius in Shelton, pg385), they created a cult in worship of Vesta, *the deity of the hearth fire* (Shelton, 1988). Their *responsibility* as female priestesses, was to *keep the fire burning at all time* (Aulus Gellius in Shelton, pg 385), the fire being symbolic of Vesta. As a restriction of becoming a Vestal Virgin, none of the girls must be disabled with a *speech or hearing problem* or some type of *physical defect* (Aulus Gellius in Shelton, pg 385). Furthermore, a prerequisite of becoming a vestal virgin is that by their parents could not have been slaves. Penalties were imposed for any misbehavior if the women failed to remain *pure and unmarried for 30 years* (Aulus Gellius in Shelton, pg 385). The penalties enforced were brutal as those who lost their virginity occurred the *most shameful and pitiable death* (Aulus Gellius in Shelton, pg 385). Whilst the points stated reflect the restrictions of their life, the opportunity to be *accompanied by body guards* and receive *granted choice seating at public games and entertainment* (Matz, 128), highlight the opportunity that the life of a vestal virgin presents. Through the life of a Vestal Virgin, the roman society displays the opportunities for Roman women in such a marital restricted lifestyle.

In Ancient Roman society; the restrictions place on women by men is evident throughout the three possible stages of their life. As a child growing up in ancient Rome, there was always a male authority figure in their life, as well as a lack of education as males were only granted this opportunity. Likewise, the authority of a male continues throughout their married life as they are restricted to complete home-based chores and only leave their surrounding of their home if accompanied by a male. Divorce and widowhood furthers their restrictions as a woman always knows that they will have to re-marry. The cult of the vestal virgins evident in Ancient Rome allows some opportunity of liberation as the priestesses receive special privileges when in public, however, must remain chaste and un-married for at least thirty years. Through the arguments explored the Ancient Roman society displays the extent to which marriage was a restriction to women.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

BOOKS:

Aulus Gellius, Attic Nights, 1.12. 1-3, 5, 9, 14 in Shelton, J. (1998) *As the Romans Did.* 2nd ed.

New York: Oxford University Press.

Balsdon, J. (1969) *Life and Leisure in Ancient Rome.* London: Phoenix Press.

Dupont, F. (1993) *Daily life in Ancient Rome.* Oxford, UK: Backwell Publishers.

Garder, J. (1986) *Roman Law and Society.* London: Croom Helm Ltd.

Matz, D. (2002) *Daily Life of the Ancient Romans.* West Port: Greenwood Press.

Matyszak, P. (2007) *Ancient Rome on Five Danarii a Day.* New York: Thames & Hudson Ltd.

Nardo, D. (2003) *Worlds of the Ancient Romans: Primary Sources.* Flamington Hills: Lucent

Books.

Ovid, *Amores,* quoted in Bernard M.W., Knox ed. *The Norton Book of Classical Literature.* New

York: W.W Norton, 1933.

Pliny the Younger, letters, published as the Letters of the Younger Pliny, trans. Betty Radice. New

York: Penguin, 1969.

Seneca, Essay on Anger, quoted in Jo-Ann Shelton, ed. *As the Romans Did: A sourcebook in*

*Roman Social history. New* York: Oxford University Press.

Shelton, J. (1998) *As the Romans Did.* 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press.

Toner, T. (2010) *Popular Culture in Ancient Rome.* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press

Vespillo, Q. (1966) Quoted in Naphtli Lewis and Meyer Reinhold, eds. *Roman Civilisation,*

*Sourcebook 1: The republic.* New York: Harper and Row.

WORLD WIDE WEB:

Bunsen, M. *Women in Ancient Rome, Encyclopedia of the Roman Empire.* Revised Edition. New York: Facts on File, Inc, 2002: *Ancient and Medieval History online.* Facts on File, Inc. <http://www.fofweb.com/activelink2.asp?ItemID=WE40&iPin=Ere2036&SingleRecord>—True (accessed 29/03/12)

Dixon, S. (2011) *BBC - History - Roman Women: Following the Clues.* [online] Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/roman> women01.shtml (Accessed: 27 Aug 2012) Procopius. *Secret History.* Trans. Athenian Society. Ancient and mediveal History online. Facts on File, inc. http ://[fofweb.com/activelink2.asp?ItemID=WE49&iPin=amdo](http://fofweb.com/activelink2.asp?ItemID=WE49&iPin=amdo) c131&SingleRecord=True (Accessed 29/03/12)

Unknown,(n.d.) *ROMAN FASHION*[ online] Available at:  
<http://www.womenintheancientworld.com/womenandfashion.htm> (Accessed: 2 Sep 2012)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Assessment Design Criteria* | *Grade* | *Comment* |
| KU1 | B | The student displays some depth of understanding of the life of a generic woman in Rome and the ideas that surrounded marriage. |
| KU2 | C | The student tends to treat women as one generic entity rather than demonstrate that Rome’s complex social structure meant that there were many experiences of life. However, the student has an informed recognition and discussion of the differences between the lives of men and women, and the alternative conditions of the life of a Vestal Virgin. |
| KU3 | C | The student shows knowledge and understanding of the impact/significance of the ideas of the society on the women of Rome. |
| RA1 | C | Competent research into primary and secondary sources. Competent analysis but not well considered. |
| RA2 | B | The student has identified an idea/practice from the ancient world– restricting women through marriage and shown how marriage impacted a woman |
| A1 | B- | The student has synthesized several sources acknowledging both ideas and quotes. The material sometimes becomes descriptive rather than applied to argument. |
| A2 | C | Informed rather than clear and persuasive. The student needed to spend more time distilling the research findings into a clear argument. The question is problematic and the use of the word ’another’ is never successfully addressed. Topic sentences are often not about argument but a statement of content. |
| A3 | B | The student has made a decision to consider primary and secondary source material and to balance them within the paper. The student has used some sound resources. |
| **Overall Grade** | **B- 19/30** |  |

Performance Standards for Stage 2 Ancient Studies

| - | Knowledge and Understanding | Research and Analysis | Application |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A | In-depth knowledge and critical understanding of texts, artefacts, ideas, events, and/or people of the ancient world.  Discerning and well-informed recognition of, and insightful reflection on, the political, social, cultural, and/or economic diversity within the ancient world.  Insightful knowledge and understanding of historical and/or archaeological concepts. | Comprehensive research and critical analysis of appropriate primary and secondary sources and perspectives.  Insightful research into and understanding of ideas and innovations that emerged from the ancient world, and in-depth consideration of their influence. | Comprehensive synthesis of evidence and appropriate and consistent acknowledgment of sources.  Clear, precise, and highly persuasive communication of ideas and arguments, using subject-specific language.  Perceptive, consistent, and accurate evaluation of the nature of sources and evidence. |
| B | Some depth of knowledge and understanding of texts, artefacts, ideas, events, and/or people of the ancient world.  Well-informed recognition of, and thoughtful reflection on, the political, social, cultural, and/or economic diversity within the ancient world.  Some depth of knowledge and understanding of historical and/or archaeological concepts. | Well-considered research and critical analysis of appropriate primary and secondary sources and perspectives.  Thoughtful research into and understanding of ideas and innovations that emerged from the ancient world, and some depth in consideration of their influence. | Well-considered synthesis of evidence and appropriate acknowledgment of sources.  Clear and persuasive communication of ideas and arguments, using subject-specific language.  Consistent and accurate evaluation of the nature of sources and evidence. |
| C | Knowledge and understanding of texts, artefacts, ideas, events, and/or people of the ancient world.  Generally informed recognition of, and considered reflection on, the political, social, cultural, and/or economic diversity within the ancient world.  Knowledge and understanding of historical and/or archaeological concepts. | Competent research and analysis of appropriate primary and secondary sources and perspectives.  Research into and understanding of ideas and innovations that emerged from the ancient world, and consideration of their influence. | Description with some synthesis of evidence and acknowledgment of sources.  Informed communication of ideas and arguments, using some subject-specific language.  Consideration and some evaluation of the nature of sources and evidence. |
| D | Recognition and basic understanding of texts, artefacts, ideas, events, and/or people of the ancient world.  Recognition and superficial consideration or description of the political, social, cultural, and/or economic diversity within the ancient world.  Recognition of one or more historical and/or archaeological concepts. | Identification and basic consideration of primary and secondary sources and/or perspectives, mainly using description.  Recognition and superficial consideration of ideas and innovations that emerged from the ancient world. | Description of evidence with acknowledgment of sources.  Superficial communication of ideas and arguments.  Superficial consideration of the nature of sources and evidence. |
| E | Limited awareness of an aspect of the ancient world.  Attempted description and emerging awareness of the political, social, cultural, and/or economic diversity within the ancient world.  Some awareness of a historical or archaeological concept. | Limited identification or use of sources.  Some awareness of an idea or innovation that emerged from the ancient world. | Attempted description of evidence.  Attempted communication of an idea or one or more points towards an argument.  Limited consideration of a source. |