

Essay Checklist

Answer and Argument

- ✓ Answers the set question directly and clearly

Structure:

- ✓ Introductory paragraph clearly states the answer and argument
- ✓ The structure of the essay is logical and avoids repetition
- ✓ The essay has a concluding paragraph

Argument:

- ✓ There is a clear and consistent argument throughout the essay
- ✓ Uses the ancient works on the reading list provided
- ✓ Uses ancient evidence to substantiate the arguments made
- ✓ Critiques/assesses the ancient evidence used
- ✓ Uses minimum three (3) modern works from the reading list provided
- ✓ Critiques/assesses the modern works used
- ✓ Writing does not plagiarise and is not overly-derivative

Technical Aspects of Ancient History

- ✓ Uses only traditional footnotes
- ✓ Bibliography cites the full publication details of every item

Syntax, Style, and Grammar

- ✓ Expression is clear, concise, and specific
- ✓ Grammar and spelling has been checked
- ✓ Punctuation has been checked

Presentation

- ✓ Uses the template provided and looks like the **MODEL ESSAY** provided
- ✓ Minimum 2.5cm left and 2.5cm right margins
- ✓ Pages are numbered
- ✓ Uses 1.5 line spacing
- ✓ Uses Times New Roman 12pt font throughout
- ✓ The Question is typed in full at the start of the essay
- ✓ A blank line has been left between every paragraph
- ✓ DOES NOT indent the start of each paragraph

The following components have been eSubmitted in order:

- ✓ The *Essay Checklist*
- ✓ The Synopsis (1 paragraph under the heading **SYNOPSIS**)
- ✓ The Essay with the **FULL QUESTION** typed in **BOLD** at the start
- ✓ The **BIBLIOGRAPHY** on a new page with full publishing details

ANCH 515
THE SHADOW OF VESUVIUS
POMPEII AND HERCULANEUM

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ASSIGNMENT 3
WORD COUNT: 3093

SYNOPSIS

What ethical or moral issues, if any, exist for the study and display of the human remains from Pompeii and Herculaneum?

Ethical issues require a judgement about what is morally right and wrong, and the wide scope of stakeholders in relation to human remains in Pompeii and Herculaneum ensure that there will be a diversity of opinions about how to treat these remains. One of the major ethical conflicts exists between the scientific belief in the value of study, and the metaphysical preference for respect for human remains. International archaeologists and codes of practice are increasingly recognising the spiritual value of human remains in contest with their scientific value. Klesert and Powell are at the forefront of this debate. The display of human remains invokes ethical debate about whether such display will offend some viewers, and whether remains are being treated ethically in Pompeii and Herculaneum. While the debates are unlikely to be resolved, continued study and display of remains will necessarily take place in the context of deliberate ethical consideration.

What ethical or moral issues, if any, exist for the study and display of the human remains from Pompeii and Herculaneum?

Ethical and moral issues relating to the Vesuvian cities arise when decisions must be made about what is right and wrong in relation to the study and display of human remains.¹ Ethical debates concern the rights of science over culture, and the difference between ancient human remains and modern remains. There is a question as to who has the right to make decisions regarding study and display, and whether ancient Roman attitudes towards death are relevant to the decision-making process. In all matters, there seems to be a moral obligation to conserve the ancient material if study and display is allowed. There are different ethical concerns relating to the study of remains, as distinct from the display of remains, and in each case there are arguments in favour of and against such treatment. All the myriad issues must be addressed in light of the global context, which entails the consideration of various cultures, as well as the requirements of international archaeological codes.

Modern archaeological codes have begun to emphasise the need to view human remains as distinct from other archaeological remains, and to treat them with a correspondingly higher level of respect. For example, in 2004 in the United Kingdom, the Church Archaeology Human Remains Working Group Report identified a “consensus that human remains are a special category of material in museum collections”.² This approach has been replicated around the world, in codes such as the Tamaki Makau-rau Accord in New Zealand.³ Archaeologists in Pompeii and Herculaneum are specifically subject to the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums, which identifies human remains as a class of ‘sensitive materials’ and calls for a higher level of tact and respect when dealing with these remains.⁴ The archaeologists at Pompeii and Herculaneum must work with

¹ These remains include various skeletons from throughout Pompeii, and the 48 bodies from the beachfront and boathouses at Herculaneum.

² Church Archaeological Human Remains Working Group Report (UK), www.museumsassociation.org/publications/9889.

³ Tamaki Makau-rau Accord, <http://www.worldarchaeologicalcongress.org/about-wac/codes-of-ethics/169-tamaki-makau-rau-accord>.

⁴ The ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums, 2004, clause 3, excerpted in Cameron, K. and Lawless, J. 2006, *Secrets of Vesuvius: Unlocking the sources from Pompeii and Herculaneum*, Thomson Nelson, Melbourne, p107.

reference to these codes, and so must recognise that dealing with human remains involves a special set of ethical issues.

Resolving ethical questions in relation to these remains is complicated by the diversity of the stakeholders. Deciding what is right and wrong necessarily involves reference to opinion, but when it comes to Pompeii and Herculaneum it is unclear whose opinion should be given most weight. It could be argued that the ethical judgement of the Italian authorities should prevail, since they are ultimately responsible for the site. Alternatively, the ethics of the local populations of Campania could take precedence, since they have replaced the ancient populations on this land. This argument is weakened by the fact that the modern populations do not share an unbroken line of ancestry with the ancient populations who died in the explosion. This is also what distinguishes the Pompeian and Herculanean populations from the New Zealand Maoris, Australian Aborigines and indigenous Americans who have played a more significant role in determining practice relating to their own ancient human remains.⁵

Another important set of stakeholders in Pompeii and Herculaneum are the international teams working on the excavation and preservation of the sites. The Anglo-American Project has been highly involved in work in Pompeii, and the Herculaneum Conservation Project was funded by American money.⁶ Individual research projects are being conducted by archaeologists from Australia, the United States, Britain, and Holland, among other countries.⁷ It could be argued that their morals are the most relevant in resolving ethical dilemmas, since they are the most involved and knowledgeable about the sites. However, given their very disparate cultural backgrounds, their ethical judgements may well differ. Many of these professionals also have a very specific and vested interest in learning as much as possible from the human remains. Their priorities would naturally lean towards continued study of the remains, which is at odds with the ethical priorities of other groups.

⁵ Smith, L. 2004, 'The Repatriation of Human Remains – Problem or Opportunity?', *Antiquity*, Vol 78, pp 404-413.

⁶ Specifically, a grant from David W Packard and the Packard Humanities Institute.

⁷ cf Estelle Lazer, John Dobbins, Rick Jones, and Dr and Prof Henneberg.

The very presence of international study teams raises another ethical issue regarding the ownership and custodianship of these ancient remains. Since the early days of excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum, artefacts including human remains have been removed from the sites. Many are on display in museums around the world, and the early writer Bulwer-Lytton was even said to have used a souvenired skull as a paperweight on his desk.⁸ This is seen by some as an abrogation of Italy's superior ethical right to own and care for this material. If such a right is acknowledged, then the next step might be to recognise a superior right for Italians to study the remains, in preference to international scholars. On the other hand, if international scholars have superior skills and training to Italian scholars, it may be more ethical to allow the international scholars to perform any studies.

Perhaps the largest group of stakeholders are the two million tourists who visit the sites each year. Again, these visitors come from a range of ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. ICOMOS has decreed that "active participation by the general public must form part of policies for the protection of the archaeological heritage."⁹ Also, each visitor has an equal right to access and understand the sites.¹⁰ However, each would have a different view on the appropriateness or otherwise of study and display of human remains. This is complicated further by the fact that attitudes not only vary between cultures, but they also change over time.¹¹ Clearly, the question of which set of ethics to apply in Pompeii and Herculaneum is fraught, and ensures that ethical dilemmas will persist in relation to the human remains from these sites.

There has recently been pressure to rebury ancient remains from sites around the world, rather than studying them.¹² This is particularly the case for remains of indigenous peoples, where their descendents are still a part of the modern community, for example

⁸ Brennan, B. and Lazer, E. 2008, *Pompeii and Herculaneum: Interpreting the Evidence*, Ancient History Seminars, Sydney, p142.

⁹ International Council on Monuments and Sites, Charter for the Protections and Management of the Archaeological Heritage (1990), www.international.icomos.org/charters/arch_e.pdf.

¹⁰ Guzzo, P.G. 'Archaeology Around the Bay of Naples' in Mattusch, C.C. 2008, *Pompeii and the Roman Villa: Art and Culture Around the Bay of Naples*, Thames and Hudson, Washington, p324.

¹¹ Brennan, B. and Lazer, E. op cit, p141.

¹² Ibid.

Australian Aborigines.¹³ Although the modern Italian population does not have the same consistent cultural link to their ancient population as Australian Aborigines may claim, this global ethical issue must still be considered with reference to Vesuvian human remains. There is, however, a fear that reburying these remains for reasons of cultural sensitivity is tantamount to burning books, in the sense that the potential for learning will be lost.¹⁴ These two opposing views position the question of reburial as an important ethical issue in relation to the human remains from the Vesuvian cities.

In considering the ethics of reburying human remains from Pompeii and Herculaneum, there is disagreement over whether ancient Roman attitudes should be taken into account. Ancient Romans believed that proper burial rites were essential for a person's soul to be able to rest in peace in the afterlife.¹⁵ This may give rise to an ethical obligation to provide the volcano victims with a proper burial, since we can assume it would have been their wish for such a burial to occur. Conversely, fate assured that these humans were denied a proper burial, and perhaps it is going too far to suggest that archaeologists now owe them what was denied by nature two centuries ago.

The question of burial raises a further ethical dilemma. If it is decided that ethics demands these bodies are now buried, the next dilemma would be how and where such burial takes place. There are no clear guidelines on whether the bodies should be buried in the ancient burial grounds near the cities, on the sites where they were found, or in modern cemeteries.¹⁶ Nor is it clear whether ethics would demand they are interred with ancient Roman funeral rites or with modern religious rites.¹⁷ Thus there is an issue regarding the degree to which ancient Roman values should inform current ethical decisions.

¹³ Turnbull, P. 1997, 'Ancestors, not Specimens: Reflections on the Controversy over the Remains of Aboriginal People in European Scientific Collections', *Electronic Journal of Australian and New Zealand History*, www.jcu.au/aff/history/articles/turnbull.htm [accessed 28 August 2012].

¹⁴ Bass, in McGowan, G.S. and LaRoche, C.J. op cit, p112.

¹⁵ Hope, V.V. 2000, 'Contempt and Respect: The treatment of the corpse in Ancient Rome' in Hope, V.M. and Marshall, E (eds) 2000, *Death and Disease in the Ancient City*, Routledge, London, p105.

¹⁶ Zarmati, L. 2005, *Heinemann Ancient and Medieval History: Pompeii and Herculaneum*, Heinemann, Melbourne, p127-8.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Modern ethicists question why the passing of time affects what is ethically appropriate when it comes to the study and display of ancient human remains. The ancient dead from Pompeii and Herculaneum are treated in a way which would never be applied to those who perish in modern day catastrophes. For example, we would not expect to view the remains of those who died in the 2011 Christchurch earthquake on display in a museum. Any public viewing of those recent remains would be considered ethically reprehensible. Yet the remains of Vesuvian victims are frequently displayed in museums in Italy and beyond.¹⁸ It is argued that modern victims elicit a much stronger emotional response than victims from the distant past, and this makes the display of ancient remains more ethically acceptable.¹⁹ Fabian saw a prejudice at work against people who inhabit different times.²⁰ Applied to Pompeii and Herculaneum, this would suggest that present day archaeologists have a prejudice (unlikely to be conscious) against the ancient Romans they study. This allows modern archaeologists to exert their right to study against the rights of the ancient populations to rest in peace. Whether or not this explanation is accepted, it is clear that ethical obligations attach differently according to whether human remains are recent or ancient.

Some ethical issues relate directly to the display of ancient human remains, as distinct from the study of human remains. One argument in favour of the display of human remains from Pompeii and Herculaneum is the moral obligation all experts have to share their knowledge. This idea was applied to the finds at Pompeii by Fiorelli himself, who felt that full disclosure was deserved.²¹ There is also a belief, in defence of displaying human remains, that the information and knowledge held in the human remains should not be reserved for the Western elite, who are their current caretakers.²² Rather, the remains should be displayed and shared so that people of differing backgrounds and cultures around the world can see and learn from them.

¹⁸ For example the exhibition at the Field Museum, Chicago in October 2006. Bergmann, B. 2006, 'Final Hours: Victims of Vesuvius and Their Possessions', *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 110, No. 3.

¹⁹ Smith, L. op cit, p405.

²⁰ Zimmerman, V. 2008, *Excavating Victorians*, State University of New York Press, Albany, p13.

²¹ Dwyer, E. 'Science or Morbid Curiosity? The Casts of Giuseppe Fiorelli and the Last Days of Romantic Pompeii' in Gardner Coates, V.C. and Seydl, J.L. (eds), 2007, *Antiquity Recovered: The Legacy of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, The J Paul Getty Trust, Los Angeles, p171.

²² Guzzo, P.G. op cit.

Perhaps problematically, this ethical imperative to share display of the remains is at odds with the fact that some people may be offended by seeing human remains on display. Some cultures, for example religious Jews and indigenous Australians, find the display of human remains deeply disrespectful and therefore ethically offensive. Other individuals find the display offensive as a personal, rather than a cultural response. In addition, parents may wish to protect their young children from what may be interpreted as ghoulish displays. This creates a dilemma, where one ethical imperative, to display the remains widely, directly contradicts the ethical imperative to respect the beliefs of visitors to the sites. One suggested solution to this ethical dilemma would be to clearly signpost remains where they are displayed. Visitors could be warned that human remains are on display within a certain room or vicinity. This would give individuals the opportunity to make their own decision about whether or not to view the remains. This would prevent individuals from being exposed to offensive material without warning, but it does not solve the greater ethical dilemma about whether display generally is right or wrong.

One further in favour of display is that human remains are a great curiosity, which leads to economic benefit. Since early excavations of Pompeii in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the bodies have drawn tourists to the site, and they continue to do so.²³ This can be seen as beneficial, since the resulting tourism helps to pay for the maintenance and conservation of Pompeii.²⁴ But crowds of tourists also threaten the site through their pollution, souveniring and general wear and tear.²⁵ Thus an ethical dilemma arises when considering whether to display the bodies in order to attract tourists to Campania.

There are also strong ethical arguments against the display of human remains from Pompeii and Herculaneum. Ethical concerns have been raised regarding the early tendency to create tableaux from the remains in Pompeii, and to stage false discoveries

²³ Beard, M. 2008, *The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii lost and found*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, p5.

²⁴ Guzzo, P.G. op cit, p325.

²⁵ Steele, P. 1994, *Digging up the Past: The Romans and Pompeii*, Macmillan Education, South Melbourne, p29.

for visiting dignitaries.²⁶ In 1768, the Austrian Emperor, Joseph II was not fooled by the ‘discovery’ of a skeleton which had been moved from its original location for his benefit.²⁷ Mauri was found to have moved skeletons in the House of the Menander in the 1920s and 1930s, and constructing imaginative scenarios by salting the scene with evidence.²⁸ More recent displays have also been guilty of arranging human remains in ways which could mislead the viewer.²⁹ There is a clear moral objection to this practice, which is dishonest at worst, and at best merely irresponsible.

A further argument against display of human remains relates to the ethical responsibility to protect ancient artefacts, human or otherwise.³⁰ Many of the human remains from Pompeii and Herculaneum are stored at the National Archaeological Museum in Naples. Unfortunately, due to a lack of funds, this museum is not satisfactorily protecting the ancient material.³¹ Problems include a dearth of custodians to guard the items, a lack of qualified personnel to clean and maintain artefacts including human remains, and the failure of the museum to photograph and document the entire collection.³² These insufficiencies add to the argument that it is ethically unsound to send human remains for display in museums.

Deficiencies in display do not relate only to the display of remains in formal museums. Ethical concerns also relate to the human remains which have been left on site at Pompeii and Herculaneum. Some theorists argue that human remains should be left in situ, claiming that it is unethical to disturb the resting place of the deceased.³³ This would support leaving the human remains on the archaeological sites. However, the careless way in which some of these remains have been treated raises an opposing ethical responsibility to remove them from the sites. Human remains have been observed lying unattended, unmarked and uncared for in Herculaneum. Here, skulls appear to be half-

²⁶ Deem, J.M. 2005, *Bodies from the Ash*, Houghton Mifflin Co, Boston, pp17-18.

²⁷ Zarmati, L. op cit, p126.

²⁸ Ibid, p127.

²⁹ For example the exhibition at the Field Museum, Chicago in October 2006. Bergmann, op cit, p497.

³⁰ This has been discussed above, with reference to codes of practice.

³¹ Deiss, J.J. 1985, *Herculaneum: A City Returns to the Sun*, Souvenir Press, London, p157.

³² Ibid.

³³ McGowan, G.G. and LaRoche, C.J. op cit, p110.

buried, with weeds growing over them.³⁴ In Pompeii, early excavators piled disarticulated bones together in the Sarno baths.³⁵ Other remains were stored in warehouses which were insecure and environmentally vulnerable.³⁶ These conditions are in breach of ethical responsibilities to protect ancient remains.

The study of human remains from Pompeii and Herculaneum, as distinct from the display of remains, raises a different set of ethical issues. The cornerstone of arguments in favour of studying human remains is the wealth of information which can be gained from such study. For example, archaeologists and scientists have used human remains from Pompeii and Herculaneum to draw conclusions about the health of ancient Romans.³⁷ They have discovered information about disease and diet, stature and occupations.³⁸ Human remains have also helped scientists draw conclusions about the experience of the Vesuvian explosion.³⁹ Not only has this information been vitally useful to historians, but the work has been instrumental in the development of study techniques with global benefit to archaeologists.⁴⁰

Scientists involved in this work believe that the scientific value of the human remains has not yet been fully realised.⁴¹ The constant development of new technologies means that the future is likely to bring new discoveries from the human remains.⁴² For example, it is currently very difficult to extract reliable DNA samples from the human remains. But scientists studying the bodies from the House of Julius Polybius hope that DNA technology will soon improve enough to allow more detailed study of these remains.⁴³ The implication is that there is an ethical obligation to continue the study of the ancient

³⁴ De Baggis, M. 2007, *Herculaneum: Diaries of Darkness and Light*.

³⁵ Brennan, B. and Lazer, E. op cit.

³⁶ Personal observation.

³⁷ Bisel, F.C. and Bisel, J.F. op cit.

³⁸ Kron, G. 2005, 'Anthropometry, Physical Anthropology, and the Reconstruction of Ancient Health, Nutrition, and Living Standards', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, Bd 54, H. 1, pp 68-83.

³⁹ Lazer, E. 2009, *Resurrecting Pompeii*, Routledge, London.

⁴⁰ Foss, P.W. 'Rediscovery and Resurrection' in Dobbins, J.J. and Foss, P.W. (eds) 2007, *The World of Pompeii*, Routledge, London, pp28-9.

⁴¹ Lazer, E. op cit, pp260, 264

⁴² Brennan, B. and Lazer, E. op cit, p144.

⁴³ Cipollaro, M. et al, op cit.

human remains in order to maintain the advance of knowledge. It has also been suggested that study should continue not just for the benefit of today's community, but because scientists and archaeologists owe it to the ancient people of Pompeii and Herculaneum to develop a true and complete picture of their lives.⁴⁴ These ethical demands support the continued study of human remains from Pompeii and Herculaneum.

One of the main ethical concerns relating to the study of human remains from Pompeii and Herculaneum involves the competing interests of science and spirituality. On one side are the scientists, who, viewing the human remains as data, have long asserted their right to access the remains for the purpose of study.⁴⁵ They assume the primacy of scientific needs over cultural rights, and take for granted that scientific study is sufficient grounds for proprietary rights over human material.⁴⁶ This has resulted in the analysis of teeth and bones, and more recently, DNA.⁴⁷ For example, the teeth of the bodies found in the Herculaneum boathouse were studied by Sara Biesel to reveal the ancient diet; Estelle Lazer has worked on the disarticulated bones stored in the Sarno Baths at Pompeii; and DNA has been extracted from thirteen bodies from the House of Julius Polybius in an attempt to examine ancient health and disease.⁴⁸ The scientists support the continued study of human remains on the grounds that ethics requires the development of knowledge where that is possible. According to this school of thought, to halt the pursuit of such knowledge would be ethically irresponsible.

A dilemma arises because this scientific investigation often comes into direct conflict with cultural concerns for the sacred significance of human remains.⁴⁹ Anthropologists such as Klesert and Powell claim that scientific and educational pursuits ignore the

⁴⁴ Klesert, A.L. and Powell, S. op cit.

⁴⁵ McGowan, G.S. and LaRoche, C.J. 1996, 'The Ethical Dilemma Facing Conservation: Care and Treatment of Human Skeletal Remains and Mortuary Objects', *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*, Vol 35, No 2, p109.

⁴⁶ Klesert, A.L. and Powell, S. 1993, 'A Perspective on Ethics and the Reburial Controversy', *Society for American Archaeology*, Vol 58, No 2, p348.

⁴⁷ Cipollaro, M et al, 1999, 'Histological Analysis and Ancient DNA Amplification of Human Bone Remains Found in Caius Iulius Polybius House in Pompeii', *Croatian Medical Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 3, pp 392-7.

⁴⁸ Biesel, F.C. and Biesel, J.F. 'Health and Nutrition at Herculaneum' in Jashemski, W.M.F. and Meyer, F.G. (eds), 2002, *The Natural History of Pompeii*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp 451-475.; Brennan, B. and Lazer, E. op cit, p124; Cipollaro, M. et al, ibid.

⁴⁹ McGowan, G.G. and LaRoche, C.J. op cit.

metaphysical significance of human remains.⁵⁰ The ethical considerations taking precedence here are respect for the dead and their ancestors, and acknowledgement of truths other than scientific truths. They reject the scientific assumption that the obligation to collect data is paramount, over the obligation to respect the cultural and spiritual importance of the ancient dead.

Ethics is often invoked to support the study of human remains on the grounds of academic freedom. This argument was used by scientists seeking access to the Kennewick human remains in the United States.⁵¹ Their calls that reburial would lead to the 'end of science' helped them gain access to those ancient remains. This same argument could apply in the case of Pompeii and Herculaneum, where scientists could well argue that to prevent study of the human remains would limit their academic freedom of archaeological research. This argument is unpopular among those theorists who see it as indefensibly universalist.⁵² They argue that the scientific need should not necessarily trump all other ethical considerations. They dispute the long-held assumption that science is vital in the search for truth, and prefer to honour the rights of those being studied, over the rights of the people who study them.⁵³

Such ethical dilemmas relating to the human remains from Pompeii and Herculaneum may never be definitively resolved. Certainly some problems, such as the treatment of remains in museums, and the damage done by tourists may find specific solutions. However, the diverse range of stakeholders, and the ethical contest between science and spirituality will ensure that ethical discourse continues indefinitely. The development of codes and practices may go some way towards finding a satisfactory compromise between the varied parties. With work continuing on the conservation of both sites, study continuing on the human remains, and display continuing in museums around the world, it seems study and display will continue in spite of the multitude of ethical dilemmas which arise.

⁵⁰ Smith, L. 2004, 'The Repatriation of Human Remains – Problem or Opportunity?', *Antiquity*, Vol 78, p406.

⁵¹ Smith, L. op cit.

⁵² Klesert, A.L. and Powell, S. op cit, p348.

⁵³ Ibid, pp349-350.

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Codes of Ethics

- Church Archaeology Human Remains Working Group Report (UK)
- ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums 2004
- International Council on Monuments and Sites, Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage 1990
- The Tamaki Makau-Rau Accord (NZ)
- The Vermillion Accord on Human Remains (USA)

DVD Resource

- De Baggis, M. 2007, *Herculaneum: Diaries of Darkness and Light*.