

CLASSICAL STUDIES

Paper 8283/01
Greek Civilisation

General comments

November 2009 saw yet another increase in the numbers taking both papers this year. Centres from several different countries entered for the first time and this may account for the continuing difference in popularity of the various sections. Examiners were pleased to note the huge increase in the number of candidates who opted for the long essay option, particularly evident in the Alexander, Virgil and Juvenal sections. There was also evidence of a decline in the number of candidates choosing the mini-essays. Moreover, Examiners reported that they felt that there was a general improvement in the overall standard of the responses. Not only was the factual knowledge often detailed but there was a more obvious attempt to address the questions posed and a generally more analytical approach to certain types of questions. Candidates should, however, read questions carefully and understand what is being asked of them before they begin to write their answer, and they should ensure that they tackle all parts of the question. They should also avoid making the same point several times but should plan their answers to cover a range of points in their argument.

Handwriting and presentation continued to be poor: questions were often not clearly labelled or answered out of sequence without any indication of this. Candidates placed too much reliance on Examiners being able to work out what they were trying to say, especially when answering questions about why something was funny or effective. It is not good enough to pick out an example without an accompanying analytical comment. Examiners reported that there were fewer rubric errors this year.

Section 1: Alexander the Great

This section has still not regained its position as the most answered topic on the Greek civilisation paper. The gobblet questions demonstrated a lack of precise knowledge and there was some misreading of questions in the mini-essays.

- 1 (a) This question produced the weakest set of answers, not just on this section but the whole paper. Candidates seemed to be making random guesses as to the location of Arbela and what Alexander hoped to do there. All the factual details offered tended to be imprecise.
- (b) Answers on the plots against Alexander were among the strongest in this section. Candidates seemed to be more comfortable when discussing events in Alexander's personal life than his military campaigns and battles.
- (c) The wedding question was relatively popular, although the names of the wives were largely random and no one seemed to know what incident happened afterwards. Candidates were stronger on the middle questions. However, some seemed to believe that Alexander and Hephaestion married one another.
- 2 (a) The questions on Alexander's visit to Troy was generally well-answered, with much enthusiasm, although some misread the 'AND' as 'OR' and this led to a number of candidates receiving lower marks.
- (b) The significance of Antipater in Alexander's success was neither popular nor well-answered. The minor characters in the story of Alexander tend to be less studied, or less well-revised, than they ought to be.
- (c) The topic of Alexander's relationship with his mother was a popular one. Most candidates could describe Olympias' background, character and involvement in her son's life in some detail.

- 3 (a) The question about what made Alexander such an effective military leader was a popular choice. Candidates could describe his military skills well, although a few tried to discuss his skills as a leader in general, or as a person, without tightly focusing on the military leadership skills of Alexander.
- (b) There were very few responses to this question, and they tended to focus on the details of religion during Alexander's reign rather than the uses he made of it for propaganda purposes.

Section 2: Socrates

Socrates continues to be one of the most popular topics on the Greek Civilisation paper, with all questions attracting a fair number of responses but the (a) and (b) gobbet questions proving to be the most popular.

- 1 (a) The passage on *Apology* produced mixed answers. Most candidates knew the size of the jury, but were not always able to explain how Socrates felt he had been misrepresented. Most assumed 'the geniuses' referred to Socrates' prosecutors, rather than the Sophists he had mentioned. The other questions were generally well answered, although Chaerephon was not always mentioned by name.
- (b) In the *Crito* passage candidates knew where the dialogue took place, and could state the reasons given by Crito for Socrates to escape. Few were aware of Socrates' military record. Socrates' proposed punishments were known by most candidates and there were some interesting discussions about the argument against escaping. Most were able to analyse the role of the Laws of Athens, although there were quite a few candidates who were unable to correctly place the passage within the dialogue.
- (c) The answers on *Phaedo* were fewer in number but tended to produce good answers. Candidates knew who was narrating the dialogue, and who the people mentioned in the question were. Candidates were also generally able to discuss the attitude towards death and the acquisition of wisdom with confidence, but were not always sure of the physical pleasures which had actually just been mentioned.
- 2 (a) Few candidates attempted the first mini-essay, but showed knowledge of Socrates' defence against the charge of corrupting the young. However, disappointingly few mentioned Socrates' association with figures such as Alcibiades and Critias.
- (b) Those who answered **Question (b)** mostly concentrated on *Crito*, discussing Socrates' imagined conversation with the Laws of Athens. Very few mentioned Socrates' own personal career, as outlined in *Apology*.
- (c) Those candidates who restricted themselves to *Phaedo* scored well in **Question (c)**, but too many answers brought in elements from other dialogues, without discrimination.
- 3 (a) Those candidates who attempted the essay on Socrates' trial generally knew details of his defence in *Apology*, but there was limited knowledge of the Athenian legal system, which at times made discussion of how fair the trial was difficult.
- (b) All four works had their proponents as the best introduction to Socrates' ideas, although *Euthyphro* was the most popular as being a very good example of the Socratic method, and *Apology* as showing Socrates' personality. Many candidates nominated two works without expressing a preference for one in particular.

Section 3: Aristophanes

The level of popularity of this topic seems to have gone back to that of previous years, with the essays, both mini and full, suffering. The gobbet questions were well-answered and candidates knew a good range of details from the plays, often indicating their enjoyment of individual plays.

- 1 (a) Candidates knew the contextual details for this question in some depth, and were able to discuss both the references to the Pynx, and the 'rapacious looking creature'. The question on the staging of the scene was better handled than in previous years.

- (b) This was the most popular question in this section, but the contextual details were not always well known, and the discussions of both the humour and Dionysus' behaviour did not always fully address the questions. Some simply wrote out a line that had made them laugh without explaining why it was funny and others did not pick out the required number of examples. In the question about Dionysus it was common to discuss his behaviour generally, rather than in the passage before taking it to the rest of the play.
- (c) There were fewer attempts at this question and they were usually weaker in terms of the required background knowledge about Cleon. Knowledge of the jury system and Procleon's obsession with jury service was much more secure.
- 2 In common with other sections on this paper, the mini-essays attracted very few responses from candidates. These tended to be short on discussion and knowledge relevant to the questions posed.
- 3 There was just one response to the long essay questions, on which was the more successful play – *Frogs* or *Wasps*. The answer displayed detailed knowledge of both plays but was unclear about what constituted success beyond the idea of being funny.

Section 4: Greek Vase Painting

The Greek vase-painting topic was less popular than in previous years. There were some splendid responses to the Plate questions, which were significantly more popular than the mini-essays and full essays. Candidates were very good at recalling factual information about the pots but less so about recalling precise details from the scenes on the pots.

- 1 (a) Knowledge of the factual details of Lydos' column krater tended to be quite secure. Candidates were also able to pick out details which reflected the function of the pot. The weakest part of the answers was the question on what made the scene lively and vivid. Answers were too general, with candidates picking out poses and depth, but they often failed to go on to make specific reference to details from the scene.
- (b) Around 40 candidates attempted the question on the Berlin Painter's volute krater depicting Achilles and Hector, though many thought the figures depicted were Achilles, Memnon, Thetis and Eos. Some were unclear about what constitutes a decorative motif and were unable to locate them with precision. Whilst many could make an attempt at discussing what they found dramatic about the scene, fewer were able to pinpoint specific examples from the depicted scene to support their assertions.
- (c) The Achilles painter lekythos question was the least popular question but produced the best set of answers, with virtually all the candidates who tackled this question having a very sound knowledge of the pot and the white ground technique.
- 2 There were only four answers to the mini-essays in this section. The answers on Exekias' Achilles and Ajax amphora produced more detailed responses because candidates' knowledge of the pots was detailed. There were no answers on the depiction of women and only one on the shapes of pots.
- 3 There were only three essays in this section and all were on the depiction of drapery. The responses tended to be a little too general rather than focusing on precise details from specific pots.

CLASSICAL STUDIES

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Section 1: Augustus

Essays proved to be very popular in this section, though the mini-essays were generally a less popular option. Those who did the commentary questions generally had a good knowledge of Augustus reign.

- 1 (a) Candidates were aware in which year the events in the passage had taken place, and the factual details required. They were less certain about the illegalities of Octavian's actions, and the rumours which followed the publication of Antony's will.
- (b) The *Res Gestae* passage was similarly well answered in terms of factual detail, but the analysis of why Octavian accepted the title of Augustus, rather than Romulus, and of whether he had no more power than anyone else were mixed, with some answers providing coherent, well argued ideas, while others were only sketchy at best.
- (c) Details about Augustus' grandsons were less well known, especially the adoption by Tiberius of Germanicus, and why Augustus was unable to name his successor directly.
- 2 (a) Those who discussed the use of propaganda found it hard to limit themselves to the time period stated in the question; too many treated it as a general essay on Octavian's use of propaganda.
- (b) Similarly, when answering question on the extent to which Augustus was regarded as a god, a large number of candidates wrote about Augustus' general attitude towards religion, instead of concentrating on Augustus being regarded as a god.
- (c) Responses to the question on the Senate showed a sound knowledge of the Senate under Augustus, but tended to be too general in approach, with limited factual detail.
- 3 (a) Of the two essays, **Question (a)** on Octavian's rise to power was by far the most popular, and generally well answered. Candidates were able to discuss the Roles played by Julius Caesar, Cicero and others, and also the personal qualities exhibited by Octavian himself. Most concentrated on the early years, and tended to minimise the military aspect of his rise to power,

and the Roles played by Antony and Agrippa, but there were some excellent answers dealing with both sides of the question.

- (b) **Question (b)**, though much less popular, was also well answered, with candidates having good factual knowledge of the Constitutional Settlements, but being unable to deal fully with the analytical aspect of the question.

Section 2: *Virgil*

This continues to be the most popular option, not only on the Roman Civilisation paper but also across both the papers. All the gobbet questions received large numbers of responses, but it was particularly pleasing to see the substantial number of candidates who were prepared to tackle the essays.

- 1 (a) There were some knowledgeable answers to the questions on Book 1 but only a handful of candidates could identify the temple of Juno as the building in which Aeneas was standing. Some candidates were rather sketchy about the details of the scenes depicted on the walls of the temple and this indicates that candidates need to undertake a more thorough revision of the texts. Almost all could give elaborate details concerning Hector's death. There was room for candidates to go into greater detail about why the comparison with the goddess (not always correctly identified) was appropriate.
- (b) Once again there was very good recall in recounting one of the more gory parts of the epic with death of Polites and Priam at the hands of Pyrrhus. Few could distinguish between the help of Juno and the help of Athena. Answers on Odysseus, the women and Aeneas fared much better. There were some excellent responses regarding the women as war booty waiting to be shipped to Greece and their new masters.
- (c) Elysium, or the Field of the Blessed, was correctly identified by the majority of candidates. A not insignificant number of candidates thought the 'royal power of Africa' was Juno (again, it seems as though more detailed revision of the roles of key characters, such as Juno and Dido, is necessary). It was pleasing to note a marked improvement in handling the simile question: the responses were longer and contained more apt discussion.
- 2 The mini-essays proved to be a much less popular option in this section. They fell into two distinct categories:
- (i) those which were very weak on factual recall and contained only very limited discussion;
- (ii) those which were very strong on recall but then failed to make any tangible points about any of the themes
e.g. describing incidents when Virgil uses disguise and deceit without considering why and the effect in the narrative;
this is what we know about Carthage without saying whether it is good, bad or indifferent.
- 3 (a) There were around 20 essays on women in the *Aeneid* and the political propaganda aspect of the *Aeneid*. They were generally well argued with good recall on Dido, Venus, and Juno. Only the best considered Helen, Creusa, Anna or saw the fact that Juno and Venus are very consistent in their attitude.
- (b) Approximately 70 candidates answered the question of how far it is possible to admire Aeneas. There were a lot of pre-prepared essays on the way Aeneas develops as a hero – the weakest essays failed to bend this to the question. There were, however, many very good responses which dealt with both sides of the argument, considered the question from the viewpoints of a contemporary and modern audience and used all the context books.

Section 3: *Juvenal*

Although this continues to be the least popular topic on the syllabus, there were more candidates tackling this section this year, particularly the gobbet questions.

- 1 (a) This was a generally well answered question with candidates showing good recall in the first few sub-questions. Few were able to recall the name of Ucalegon or mention the number of people living in a block of flats as one of the dangers. There was good discussion of Cordus' situation and

more candidates seem well versed in handling literary criticism style questions than in previous years.

- (b) Candidates' knowledge of the duties of a client was very secure in this question and the question on satiric technique was better handled than in previous years, with candidates providing both knowledge and fuller discussion than in previous years. There was also good appreciation of how Juvenal was castigating the host of the dinner party. Candidates' background knowledge of the Civil Wars was a little hazy.
- (c) Few attempted this question but the answers were well informed. Again, the understanding of the social and historical background was weaker than the literary criticism responses. Too many did not understand the practice of making speeches. The anti-climax responses were generally outstanding.
- 2 The mini-essays received only six responses in total. They were similar in standard to the Virgil mini-essays and fell into the same two categories. There was, however, slightly more direction in the responses to the question about living in the countryside.
- 3 (a) Both essays had their supporters but the one on Juvenal's aims in writing satire was slightly more popular. The majority of responses could not get beyond saying that he wanted to tell everyone what was wrong with Roman Society. This was fine as far as it went but responses needed to do more than give a series of examples and go on to explore what aspects he thought had gone wrong or consider how *Satire X* does not fit this model. There could also have been greater recall from the programmatic *Satire 1*.
- (b) The wider question on what makes Juvenal's writings so memorable allowed candidates to include everything and the kitchen sink about why they liked or disliked Juvenal. The depth of knowledge and the precision of the recall were often the distinguishing factors between the weaker and stronger responses

Section 4: Roman Art and Architecture

- 1 (a) Around 70 candidates chose to answer on the Colosseum but there was some confusion between the modern name (and how it came to be known by that name) and the name by which the Romans knew it. All too often it was identified as the Circus Maximus. The emperors Domitian and Flavian were often mentioned as having a role in the construction. The materials used were often well known but the areas and reasons given were sometimes more connected with common sense rather than a proper structural/aesthetic reason. Many candidates did not read the last question carefully enough and failed to concentrate on the use of the building and often simply repeated material from the previous question.
- (b) The most popular question on both papers, over 100 responses were received to the goblet question on the statue of the Patrician and there were some detailed answers which scored high marks. To access the highest marks, candidates needed to be more precise when discussing how the statue demonstrates the veristic approach. It is not simply enough to make a list of bullet points or state that the statue has wrinkles without making reference to specific aspects of the statue and expanding on the discussion.
- (c) Candidates displayed a wealth of factual knowledge about the Arch of Titus but what was innovative about the sculptural panel often eluded many candidates.
- 2 There were only four attempts at the mini-essays (and one of those was a rubric error). The Pantheon question attracted the best response with a fine range of detail. The answers on the arch of Constantine and the Canopus were lacking in specific factual content.
- 3 It was disappointing that in a year when the essay was a popular option in many of the other topics there were only 2 essays for the Art and Architecture section, one for each essay.