

CLASSICAL GREEK

Paper 9787/01
Verse Literature

General comments

Almost all candidates took the Euripides rather than the Homer option. Candidates chose the Unseen Literary Criticism option and the alternative theme essay in approximately equal numbers. There were some excellent answers. Candidates tended to know their set text very well, and were able to use – mainly accurately – a variety of technical terms, such as asyndeton. However, on occasion, there was an excessive emphasis on the sound and position of words, with some ingenious but unconvincing claims made about the effects achieved by such features. Answers that provided only a listing of stylistic features in either the commentary questions or the unseen literary criticism could not achieve high marks. Concentration on such features should not be detrimental to an analysis of the meaning of the text on the page.

Specific comments

1. Most candidates were able to give an accurate account of what Orestes means in lines 1–2. There were some very good answers to **Sub-Question (ii)**, though sometimes there was too much time spent on the sound or position of the words. There is plenty to say about the words used and their meanings. On the other hand the chiasmic organization of line 4 was often observed and related to the idea of ‘contempt’. Not all candidates answered all three parts of **Sub-Question (iii)**. Most were able, however, to demonstrate the differences between Orestes and Electra, and the discrepancy between Orestes as he appears in this dialogue and the assumptions Electra holds about him. Translations were accurate.
2. There were many good answers here, demonstrating an excellent knowledge of the set text. Electra’s character was well observed for **Sub-Question (ii)**, though in **(i)** though once again in some cases there was too much time taken discussing word position and sound. Most answers dealt well with the prayers, the various addresses, and the stichomythia.
3. In answering the various sub-questions here the candidates demonstrated thorough knowledge of the Homer set text and were able to analyse the poetry with some sophistication.
4. See above for 3.

Section B

5. There were some very good, well-argued essays in response to this question. Good answers distinguished between the reactions of Electra and Orestes. Most found the reaction of the former less convincing because of her earlier stridency. That is perfectly reasonable, but it was still surprising to find no answer that stressed that the extremity of Electra’s shock and despair may be an effect of her earlier certainty.
6. Most answers to this question took the reasonable route of discussing the extent to which the play could be seen as a criticism of the gods. Thus, the role of Apollo in the matricide was often referred to, as was the difference between Apollo on the one hand and Castor and Pollux on the other. Some answers lacked the understanding of Greek religion more generally: such context would have allowed some answers to have developed a more sophisticated analysis of the representation of the gods in this play.
7. This essay was done extremely well. Knowledge of the set text was very good and candidates were able to write with care and panache about the character of Achilles in *Iliad* XXII. Answers dealt well with the idea of the Homeric hero and how Achilles both exemplified and complicated that idea.

8. No essays were attempted on this question.

Section C

9. Unseen Literary Criticism

As mentioned in the introductory remarks, the answers offered here were generally less successful. The first and third sub-questions – each worth 4 marks – were fairly well answered, but problems were encountered in the 12-mark **Sub-Question (ii)**. In trying to explain how this murder scene is horrific, some candidates took the decision to concentrate exclusively on stylistic features, which was developed in an unconvincing way. This was surprising as there is so much to comment on in what the lines actually say: the animality and insanity of Agave (foaming at the mouth, rolling eyes); the brutality of the murder; the yelling, raving, howling women; blood, flesh and so on. Many of these important parts of the description were ignored in favour of dubious claims about enjambement.

10. This was the only theme essay attempted. Candidates demonstrated very good knowledge of both the main set text and also Sophocles' *Electra* and Aeschylus' *Choepori*. Answers dealt well with the distinctive nature of Euripides' portrayal of Electra, and its anti-heroic and 'realistic' elements. They were also able to place their analysis of Electra's character in the context of how revenge more generally is represented in the plays.



CLASSICAL GREEK

<p>Paper 9787/2 Prose Literature</p>
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Most candidates performed well on this paper. Examiners were pleased that the number of scripts on the two different set books was relatively even and that the marks from the two different options were in a similar range. The best candidates for the *Symposium* demonstrated an impressive understanding of both the philosophical and literary elements of Plato's writing. The best candidates for the *Histories VI* showed a detailed knowledge of the Herodotus text and a wider understanding of the historical background.

One challenge for candidates on this paper is to be consistent on all the different elements and a few candidates scored lower marks for the essay than on the other sections of the paper. Time management is crucial here. Another important point is that candidates must demonstrate that they understand the content and significance of the passages. Weaker candidates tended to want to search for literary devices of doubtful value rather than to discuss the meaning of the extracts. We would strongly encourage Centres to teach all candidates to concentrate on answering the question by explaining the meaning of the passage rather than to discuss sound effects or to get bogged down in trying to use literary terms (especially when these are not backed up with evidence from the text.) Most candidates avoided these traps, but a few did not demonstrate that they understood what the Greek text meant and they lost valuable marks because of this. However, candidates who demonstrated that they understood the texts and who could provide evidence of thoughtful reading of the original Greek did very well. There were a number of D1 performances on this paper and Examiners were very impressed by the candidates who engaged with the philosophical and historical questions with skill and enthusiasm.

CLASSICAL GREEK

<p>Paper 9787/03 Unseen Translation</p>

All the candidates performed reasonably well on this paper and there were a number of exceptional scripts (clear D1 standard).

Most candidates did well on the prose unseen (**Question 1**). There were some more difficult sections in this passage in the middle and towards the end and these did differentiate the candidates.

There was a wider range of marks for the verse unseen, as one would expect. The scansion was done to a good standard by most candidates and this helped to balance up the marks between the two questions. The verse unseen was one of the most challenging parts of this specification, but it was very encouraging that there were some strong performances on this difficult passage.

Based on this year's scripts, Examiners would encourage Centres to remind their candidates to work hard on mastering the principal parts of different Greek verbs. Candidates generally demonstrated a good knowledge of Greek vocabulary and grammar. Wide reading of Greek tragedy in the original should help candidates to prepare for the verse unseen.

The Examiners were also pleased that the majority of candidates did their best to translate the passages into clear and idiomatic English.

CLASSICAL GREEK

Paper 9787/04

Prose Composition or Comprehension

General comments

Nearly all the candidates tackled the prose composition option. In the main, the Greek produced by candidates was grammatically and syntactically accurate; some sometimes succeeded in writing idiomatic and stylish Greek. There were good examples of particles used in connection and of appropriate use of the participle; some candidates were also not afraid of the sequence of mood, taking the opportunity to exhibit their knowledge of the optative. There were several excellent or very good compositions. Vocabulary was mainly very good.

Specific comments

A challenging opening, this, was dealt with well by most candidates. Perhaps more than expected knew the correct part of ἵστημι for *standing*, and most knew the correct syntax for verbs of fearing. The second sentence involved an indirect question which, while spotted by most candidates, was not always done correctly (the case of ὀπίσσω was often wrong). Quite a few candidates struggled with the aorist passive of ἐρωτάω. Some used the wrong verb entirely (ἀιτέω). For *greatly surprised* it was indeed surprising that more candidates were not aware of θαυμάζω. Some candidates dared to write Croesus' exclamation in indirect speech; most were able to handle the result clause effectively. The last three sentences were, in general, translated very accurately.

For the candidates who attempted the comprehension **Questions (xiii)** and **(xiv)** posed some problems.

In conclusion, though, this paper was well handled by the majority of the candidates.

