

CLASSICAL HERITAGE

Paper 9786/01

Foundations of History and Culture (Greek)

General comments

This remains a small entry subject and for all papers candidates did not attempt the full range of questions. In paper 1, candidates only answered the questions on Alexander, Comedy and the rise of democracy.

Candidates appeared to find the time allowed adequate for writing two essays, and there was some evidence of planning though it would be to candidates' advantage to develop this further. There was a greater use of primary sources this year, which is to be welcomed; in some essays there was a good engagement with the evaluation of these sources. Candidates were also able to show a more confident command across the topics studied, so there was a greater development of answers and a more critical engagement with the questions set.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Alexander the Great:

The **(a)** question was much more popular in this section. Candidates showed a sound grasp of the main events in Alexander's life and were able to make some sound points about his interactions with the divine at different points in his life. Some candidates were able to discuss effectively the importance of his mother Olympias, and there were some interesting analyses of his introduction of Persian customs as the conquest of the Persian Empire proceeded. Relatively few candidates were comfortable discussing the final stages of Alexander's career and the period leading up to his death, though there were some interesting connections made between his military success and his own self-belief. Those who answered the **(b)** question were also less certain about the final stages of Alexander's life, and there was some confusion about what he actually achieved in India.

Question 2

Foundations of comedy:

No one attempted the **(b)** question, so these comments relate to the **(a)** question.

Candidates were in general able to demonstrate a sound understanding of at least some of the plays of Aristophanes and Menander, and largely avoided the trap of plot summary. There was arguably too little focus on the 'too painful' problems highlighted in the **(a)** question, though candidates were able to give a reasonable sense of the differences between Old and New Comedy, and relate the material studied to the problems that society might face. There were some interesting discussions of war (and peace), and the radical democracy was seen as a fertile ground for a variety of social discussions conducted very publicly.

Question 5

The rise of democracy in fifth-century Athens:

In this section, the **(a)** question proved less popular than the **(b)** question. In **(a)** there were some interesting discussions of the reforms of Pericles and Ephialtes, which were not always clearly related to the changes in Athenian society. There were some good discussions of the importance of state pay and the changing focus of the democracy that developed under Pericles. Some good points were made about the further development (or decline) of the democratic system after the death of Pericles. In the **(b)** question, there were some interesting discussions of the importance of rhetoric in public life in Athens during this period.

Many candidates focused on the importance of public speaking in the assembly in particular, and there were some good discussions of the evidence for Pericles' ability in this regard (in Thucydides, Plutarch and Aristotle). There were also some interesting points made about Thucydides 2.65 and the fining of Pericles in the aftermath of the start of the Peloponnesian War. Candidates also suggested some other important aspects for political success in Athens (e.g. leadership in war as a general), and there were some notable comparisons with other individuals such as Cimon, Cleon or Nicias.

Questions 3, 4 and 6 were not attempted by any candidate.

CLASSICAL HERITAGE

Paper 9786/02

Foundations of History and Culture (Roman)

Key Messages

To reach Levels 4 and 5 in their responses candidates need to combine a range of detailed knowledge that is well directed at the question, with strong analysis demonstrating reasoning and judgement. Candidates who consistently linked relevant evidence with considered opinions were well rewarded, especially those who did so in structured arguments, demonstrating a strong understanding of the subject matter.

General Comments

Better responses tended to be tightly focused on the wording of the question, and many candidates produced developed answers rather than lists of examples or facts. Some candidates offered assertions and opinions without much in the way of supporting evidence. It is important that factual knowledge is secure and evident in responses.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) This question was answered well with careful discussion and focused argument. There was clear citation of evidence and good use of sources, as well as discussion of their reliability. It was possible to do well by discussing a narrow range of issues in detail.
- (b) This question was favoured by the majority of candidates. Weaker responses fell into an easy pattern of listing the different succession plans Augustus made without discussion or context. Others neglected the “How well...” opening of the question, instead asserting that Augustus did make plans and was succeeded, so must have been successful. Better responses were careful to include dates to show the progression of Augustus’ plans. They gave more context to Augustus’ decisions, attempted to discuss and explain how they led into each other, and avoided a narrative list of potential heirs. They also gave an even treatment to the whole of Augustus’ reign with strong discussion of each serious potential heir and his political context.

Question 2

- (a) A general observation is that candidates knew a great number of stories from the *Metamorphoses*, and were able to list several examples relevant to the question, having clearly enjoyed their study of this poem. All candidates were able to give several examples of love found in the poem; stronger responses attempted to differentiate between them in matters of tone or gravity, or how they moved the reader, and others may have been improved by avoiding a narrative or catalogue approach. Weaker responses missed the steer in the supporting suggestions towards considering what else the poem may have been about, while stronger candidates showed an awareness that a story featuring a form of love may not actually have been about love.
- (b) No candidates answered on this option.

Question 3

No candidates answered on this option.

Question 4

No candidates answered on this option.

Question 5

- (a) This question required a clear appreciation of Cicero's political actions and views as distinct from claims he may have made. Stronger responses gave some demonstration of this with well chosen evidence, also seeking to define the terms *popularis* and *optimatus*. Good comparison was made with other political figures of the time in order to give a clearer definition of Cicero's position. Other responses could have made better use of comparison or clearer distinctions between the two political factions. Responses were well directed at the question; stronger ones gave more consistent and relevant examples and detail to support assertions.
- (b) The colourful history between these two characters had clearly made it an appealing aspect of the syllabus for candidates and responses were determined and showed strong opinions. Candidates could have improved their responses by avoiding narrative, especially on the *Bona Dea* scandal, and incorporating more evaluation, for example on political as well as personal differences. Some responses neglected to mention Cicero's exile as engineered by Clodius, or Cicero's defence of Clodius' killer, Milo; other candidates gave a more balanced and even treatment of the various aspects of this issue.

Question 6

No candidates answered on this option.

CLASSICAL HERITAGE

Paper 9786/03

Classical Literature- Sources and Evidence

General comments

This remains a small entry subject and for all papers candidates did not attempt the full range of questions. In paper 3, candidates only answered the questions on the Roman Empire and the gods and heroes topics.

General comments on the work of candidates for this demanding paper remain the same as in previous years. It should be noted, however, that in this session candidates did seem better prepared for their topics and more readily able to use the materials on the paper. Nonetheless, candidates should be encouraged to allocate their time on this paper as instructed on the front cover of the paper. Candidates are asked to address a question derived from a (modern) critical passage and also to use, not just mention, 2 separate text passages to present an argument. Candidates have tended to construe this task in too narrative a fashion to the detriment of the analysis. It is also advantageous for candidates to invest time in written planning as this has been shown to be helpful in maintaining the logical progression of an argument and not drifting away from the point during the course of an essay. It is also beneficial to bring in sufficient external detail whether examples or citation which would help to support their argument.

Comments on specific questions

Question 2

Roman Empire

The candidates who answered this option were mostly well prepared, and showed a good knowledge of the range of texts that had been studied. Most referred to Caesar, Josephus and Tacitus in their answers. The best were able to evaluate the writings of these authors, and use this evaluation to support a clear line of argument in response to the proposition in the question. Only the best candidates made use of the initial passage on the paper. Candidates should be reminded that the passages on the paper are there to support their answers, and that clear references to these passages are always helpful in any answer. They should take the key themes out of these passages, and relate them to other areas or sections of text which they have studied which either support or contradict the ideas put forward both in the question and in their arguments. Candidates would also be well-advised to remember the limitations of our source evidence when looking at this topic, and should be encouraged in their studies in preparation for this topic to think carefully and critically about the sources.

Question 4

Gods and heroes

Much of what has been written in the general points and in the specific comments for **Question 2** also applies to **Question 4**.

Candidates were asked to explore the nature and importance of women in the books studied and whether they had a greater role than that of property and prizes. It was good to see well-focused answers drawing on the material given in the 'starter' passages. It was relatively easy to argue that women were no more than property and the first passage could have been used to back up this line of thought. However, the second passage highlighting Penelope's role in matters in Ithaca and her resolve to test her returning 'husband' also suggested another side to the picture. Penelope and, possibly, Clytemnestra could have provided compelling evidence for women being more than just property. That said, candidates did manage a broad sweep of female characters including Dido, Calypso and Circe as well as Penelope, Briseis and Clytemnestra. There is a broader discussion of the range of female characters in the mark scheme.

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Candidates should be reminded that planning is never a waste of time. It is also true that questions do not demand one right answer but Examiners are looking for substantiated argument.

CLASSICAL HERITAGE

<p>Paper 9786/04 The Classical Heritage</p>

The Principal Examiner felt that there was a pleasing increase in the general level of response this year. The candidates had grasped the concept of relating some aspect of the classical world to more recent times and had done sufficient research to give themselves something substantial to write about in the actual controlled session, aided by much better presented A4 sheets.

Most, predictably, looked at variants of the modern media, usually film and television (*Troy* and *Rome* were popular) but it was refreshing to read one account of how the modern novelists Madeline Miller and Margaret Atwood had been inspired by Homer. There was also an ambitious attempt to compare the American government to the Roman; this however missed a few tricks by restricting itself to the Republic, despite the advice from the Examiner that Presidents versus Emperors would be a fruitful source of comparison.

There were a couple of other papers where the advice of the Examiner was not taken note of. This was usually to point out that the proposed study was too narrow to allow the full range of AO1 marks to be awarded. For example, to compare the portrayal of the gods in *The Iliad* with their (minimal) portrayal in the film *Troy* is too thin for a two-hour written paper.

Overall, there was plenty of interesting and thoughtful material produced here and the candidates should be pleased with the results of their research.