



GENERAL COMMENTS

Most students performed well on the 2012 Classical Studies examination. Their answers were of a good length and showed an adequate knowledge of the texts. However, less attention was given to answering the specific questions in the Section A pieces, and the Section B essays were often filled with information that wasn't relevant to the statement given. Students generally demonstrated broad knowledge of the works, but their understanding of the tasks was often unsophisticated. Several questions were misinterpreted by students. In particular, the phrase 'the work as a whole' in the Section A questions on *The Iliad*, Book 16 and *The Aeneid*, Book 8 referred to those prescribed books and not to the entire Iliad or Aeneid as some students thought. More students used two script books this year, indicating that they had plenty of ideas about what to write. Some students did not plan their answers or essays and this tended to negate any advantage that may have been gained by having more time to produce longer responses.

It could be seen by the order of responses in the script books that most students answered the questions in the order presented on the paper; however, a significant number wrote the Section B essay first and some went from Section A to Section B then back to Section A. A small number changed the order of the Section A responses, choosing to begin with part c.

Many Section A responses were superficial, providing brief, literal responses instead of examining the question.

There were few memorised and obviously pre-prepared Section B essays, though many students wrote general comparisons between the works in Section B rather than specifically addressing the statement in the question. Sociohistorical material had obviously often been prepared in advance and was not linked to the topic. Students need to understand that the questions in Section A and the statements for discussion in Section B are not starting points for discursive reflections. Section A responses must specifically address the question posed, and Section B essays must defend a position in response to the specific statement for discussion.

Descriptive essays abounded in the Section B responses and analysis was less common. There was little evidence of planning essays. Students showed that they knew the works but they were not skilled in using this knowledge to support an argument.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section A – Individual study

Question chosen	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
%	0	35	27	7	7	10	2	0	12

Part a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	2	13	23	30	20	11	2.9

Part b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	4	10	27	33	19	7	2.9

Part c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	3	9	10	13	16	18	15	9	4	1	5

In general, Section A responses earned fewer marks in 2012 than in previous years. This reveals a need for students to be more practised in answering questions of this type. They need to understand the meaning of 'significance'. Students need to know the difference between describing and analysing, and between narrating and constructing an argument. In short, students need to read the question carefully and reflect deeply before they write.



Most students understood the questions but did not answer them very specifically. In many cases, more use could have been made of the extracts. Few students showed detailed knowledge of the immediate context of extracts.

Homer, *The Iliad* Book 16

In Part a., many students ignored or misinterpreted the phrase ‘what has just taken place’ and wrote about distant events. Many showed their lack of detailed knowledge by asserting that there was a drawn out duel between Hector and Patroclus. Better answers noted several things – the aristeia of Patroclus at the walls of Troy, Apollo’s intervention, disarming Patroclus, Euphorbus spearing Patroclus, and finally Hector coming third.

Few students pointed out the irony in the simile for part b., which makes Hector a lion as opposed to Patroclus’ wild boar. Better answers referred to the response of the Achaeans, the use of vivid description and the detail in the extended simile. Some students were able to link the use of patronyms to the epic tone.

Most responses to part c. stated that the death of Patroclus triggered Achilles’ return to the battlefield and ultimately the death of Hector. Few students gave a sense of Book 16 in its focus on Patroclus – his behaviour at the start of the book, his transformation into a killing machine and his aristeia observed and managed by the gods. Some students mentioned the roles of Zeus and Apollo in the death of Patroclus, which was an important point. Some insightful students noted that Hector was wrong in his assumptions about the motives of Patroclus and Achilles. A common error among the less successful students was to ignore the word ‘significance’ and to simply narrate without explaining the meaningful links between events.

Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*

The key words in part a. were ‘in this way’. Most responses attributed the tone of Oedipus’ speech to his urgent desire to catch the murderer of Laius. Few students stated that Oedipus was responding to the Chorus’ plaintive appeals for divine assistance or that he was asserting the humanist belief that men, not gods, were responsible for solving the problems of men.

Most responses to part b. referred to the plague in Athens and the leadership of Pericles, with whom Oedipus had been compared. Stronger students referred to notions of justice and citizenship. The best answers also referred to humanist ideas and sophist teaching.

Two errors stood out in the responses to part c. Firstly, a large number of students identified the motif of seeing/understanding as the most important technique used by Sophocles in the passage, but they were unable to find this motif because it isn’t there. Students need to read the passage carefully. Secondly, some students thought that the line ‘your victims burned to the gods’ was evidence of human sacrifice, but this isn’t the case.

Most students relied on dramatic irony to develop their answer, while more sophisticated responses discussed the characterisation of Oedipus and the rhetorical devices, the declamation and repetitions. The ideas – humanism, justice and the responsibilities of the citizen – to respond to this question could be developed from the answers for part b. Only the most accomplished students were able to use their answers to parts a. and b. to scaffold a successful response to part c.

Plato, *Apology*

This question was not answered very well. Few students were able to convey a feeling for Socrates through the eyes of Plato. Students needed to explore the questions rather than give obvious answers. For instance, ‘slander and jealousy’ were the reasons for the hostility people felt towards Socrates, but who were the slanderers, who was jealous and how did they express this hostility? Most students were more confident addressing the techniques of Socrates, his confident tone, inclusive language, and his courageous comparison of himself and Achilles. Part c. required detailed reference to the relationship between Socrates and the Athenians using the extract to illustrate this uneasy connection. A few lines were not sufficient to explore this subject.

The Temple of Zeus at Olympia

Most students did well on part c. because they had studied the West Pediment and were able to find ideas and techniques in the image. They weren’t as successful on the history of the temple and Phidias. Comprehensive knowledge of the prescribed artwork generally produces good responses, but anything short of comprehensive knowledge can leave a student guessing wildly, as some did.



Virgil, *The Aeneid* Book 8

Many students misinterpreted the question in part a. Although the lines are located in Rome, and near the end of Book 8, better answers specified that they were ‘on the shield made for Aeneas by Vulcan’. In part b. there were few obvious techniques in the passage to list and only skilful students were able to convey a sense of the epic tone of Virgil, the high-minded didactic observer. The vivid and detailed description was usually noted, but students could also have cited the selection and sequencing of the scenes on the shield. In part c., ‘the work as a whole’ referred to Book 8, but many students attempted to encompass the whole epic in their answers. Successful responses demonstrated why a glimpse of the future of Rome was so important to Aeneas in Book 8. This meant explaining the relevance of each scene that appeared on the shield.

Cicero, *In Defence of Marcus Caelius Rufus*

Only the best responses conveyed a sense of the great judicial orator at work. Many students identified prosopopoeia but few saw Cicero’s humour. Responses to part c. needed to go further than just questioning and repetition to describe Cicero’s careful construction of his case. Many answers to part b. focused only on the morality of women, ignoring the morality of men. It wasn’t sufficient to write that Cicero chose Appius Claudius because he was an ancestor of Clodia. He was a very particular sort of ancestor, one whose discipline and public service stood in stark contrast to Clodia’s lack of these things.

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*

There were no responses to the extract from *Metamorphoses*.

The Colosseum

Most students were able to do well on this question. Some students seemed to have more detailed knowledge than others, but responses were relevant and informative. Most students noted Vespasian’s determination to repudiate the legacy of Nero in part a., the seating arrangements in part b. and the various engineering problems that were overcome in part c. One common error was the suggestion that the Romans invented the arch to address the weight of the rising tiers of the Colosseum.

Section B – Comparative study

Question chosen	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
%	1	13	33	25	8	10	0	10

Many of the observations made in previous years held true in 2012. Many essays were long, often unplanned, outpourings of description and narration with limited analysis and some general comparison tacked on. Sociohistorical material tended to be general and was often not closely related to the topic. The impression was that many students had a good deal of knowledge but little confidence in using that knowledge to construct a persuasive argument.

There was a lack of comment on techniques in most essays. The purpose of examining techniques in a comparative essay is not to list the tricks in the writer’s toolkit, but to establish the ‘voice’ of that writer. This is valuable in all the pairings but especially noticeable in the comparison of Herodotus and Thucydides, where the differences between the historians may not be immediately apparent to every reader.

The statements in the questions were uncontroversial, and most students simply accepted them without question and proceeded to roll out the evidence. It is easy to agree that Thucydides is less optimistic. But someone who has read Thucydides’ work carefully would know that optimism was something he rejected for good reason. He doesn’t ‘lack’ optimism; he questions the wisdom of being anything but clinical. Similarly with Question 2, Clytaemnestra and Medea appear to be destructive forces. But is it that simple? Does this mean that women generally are destructive? Are these works really about the destructiveness of women? The few students who disagreed with the statement, or who qualified their agreement, were able to construct superior arguments because they didn’t simply review the destructive actions of Clytaemnestra and Medea. Some students showed that other female characters were not destructive. Other students showed that women were only destructive when they acted as men or when they were the agents of divine forces. These refreshing ideas were the result of challenging the statement. In short, students should look past the obvious.

Responses to Question 3 (comparing *The Odyssey* Book 11 and *Frogs*) would have benefited from a close examination of the terms of the statement. What is ‘of value’ that the living might seek from the dead? Too many essays ploughed into a simple narration of the journeys of Odysseus and Dionysus without considering this.

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Because many essays accepted the statements as fact, they often provided insufficient support for interpretations based on them. Some essays declined into a series of general, unsupported claims. It is much better to examine a particularly relevant incident or speech in detail, starting with the evidence and only moving to a conclusion when a point is well made.

Some students included Greek terms unnecessarily, which was often detrimental to the response. On the other hand, essays on *The Iliad* Book 22 and *The Aeneid* Book 12 would have benefited from more reference to *pietas* as a point of difference.

Questions 2 and 3 were the most popular in 2012, and there were no essays in response to Question 6.

Criterion 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	1	1	4	6	11	15	18	19	14	8	3	6

Most students showed good knowledge of the texts and included plenty of sociohistorical material. Only a few students neglected to consider the sociohistorical context, although much sociohistorical material was unrelated to the essay's argument. Knowledge tended to be general in character but was reasonably accurate. To improve their grasp of detail, students are urged to re-read their texts close to the examination.

Criterion 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	3	6	9	12	15	19	17	12	5	1	5.5

Stronger students analysed, while weaker students described and narrated. Many students were content to present what they knew without explaining the implications. Success in this criterion is the mark of a sophisticated understanding of the texts.

There was a general lack of analysis of techniques. Students should presume that there are ideas underlying these classical works, and reasons why the writers have chosen to present the ideas in the way that they have. Analysis of techniques answers the question of why the writer has chosen this way of presenting ideas. Why does Thucydides emphasise the motives of the various Athenians who supported the Sicilian Expedition? Precisely because this is an example of optimism at work: people considering only the more desirable possibilities among the many possible outcomes. This is Thucydides' way of letting facts be the teacher, of supporting his claim to objectivity and showing the nature of human error. Herodotus had no need to use this approach because his story was not of false hopes and unfounded optimism.

Criterion 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	1	3	6	10	11	14	20	16	12	6	1	5.5

A lot of the comparison between techniques was workmanlike, with comments on the works juxtaposed and differences pointed out. Many students found so many superficial differences between *The Odyssey* Book 11 and *Frogs* that they never arrived at the profound differences. Many responses successfully created portraits of Livy and Tacitus to demonstrate their differences, whereas few were able to clearly distinguish the ideas and characters of Aeschylus and Euripides or Herodotus and Thucydides. A key to addressing this criterion is having a clear understanding of the intellectual differences between the writers. The comparisons then have a focus.

Criterion 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	2	5	7	14	14	18	17	12	6	2	5.6

Students scored well on this criterion if they argued a case throughout their essay and produced relevant evidence to support their argument. Some students lacked evidence and their essays contained few quotes or references to specific passages. Other students did not argue a case or veered away from their argument. The first step should always be to examine the statement carefully. This year, many students gave their unqualified support to the statement and proceeded as if there was no case to prove, just an accepted truth to be illustrated. Students who tackled Question 4 did better than most in their focus on Mark Antony's 'lack of judgment'. The more sophisticated responses showed that, although the statement may have been true, the impression of Mark Antony's lack of judgment was created by a very skilled debater who selected his material carefully. The best essays comparing *The Iliad* Book 22 and *The Aeneid* Book 12 were able to

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show the nature of the 'different views of the gods' held by Homer and Virgil; the gods in *The Aeneid* were instrumental in creating Rome while those in *The Iliad* were instruments of a Fate which was above human concerns.