

GENERAL COMMENTS

The performance of students on the 2014 Classical Studies examination was comparable with previous years. Most students chose questions that they could answer competently and their responses showed adequate knowledge of the texts. Many made an effort to be comprehensive in their responses to questions in Section A, but sometimes included material that was not very relevant. Most responses in Section B did not begin by defining terms to shape the argument in the opening paragraph. Students were often too concerned with demonstrating their knowledge and did not give sufficient attention to the focus and relevance of their material. Students needed to demonstrate awareness of the values of classical cultures because these values informed the questions in the examination generally and are the central focus of Classical Studies.

Most students followed the order of the questions on the paper, but some tackled the essay first and left the short-answer questions until last. Occasionally, a student ran out of time to complete the last response, but most finished the paper comfortably. A minority of students answered part c. in Section A before parts a. and b. There may be a disadvantage in doing this as parts a. and b. often build towards part c.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding errors resulting in a total less than 100 per cent.

Section A – Individual study

Question chosen	none	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
%	0	69	8	2	2	16	0	1	1

Part a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	3	7	21	34	25	10	3

Part b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	6	9	26	36	18	5	2.7

Part c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	5	4	7	10	13	18	19	14	7	2	1	4.9

The questions were understood well. Most students made good use of the extracts and images provided, though few showed detailed knowledge of the immediate context of the extracts. Students' interpretations were accepted if they were adequately supported.

Homer, *The Iliad*, Book 3

Question 1a.

Most students knew that the old men had gathered to watch the duel between Paris and Menelaus to bring an end to the war. Some were unnecessarily scrupulous in starting their attribution of 'cause' with the Golden Apple and included too much backstory. The image of the cicadas was well handled, with plenty of thoughtful speculation about what Homer had in mind. Few students saw irony here, in that the words of the old men are wise but can have no effect because their power to influence events has been lost.

High-scoring responses analysed Homer's words carefully. The old men are referred to by name and emphasis is given to their dignity and wisdom ('unfailing good sense'). They are 'gray' and old; their fighting days are over. Their proximity to Priam and allocation of seats above the gates denotes their stature. Their words still hold power, but their

eloquence is made feeble by their weak voices, like cicadas, clear but falling, dying away. Alternatively, the clarity of their speech is stressed through the simile; just as the sound of cicadas rises and falls through the forest, so too does their counsel echo through Troy.

Question 1b.

This question assessed close reading skills. Did the old men express hostility towards Helen? The highest-scoring answers recognised that it is ‘beauty’, an abstraction, that is blamed, not a person. Most students picked up on the fatherly tone of Priam.

The old men murmur, reluctant to state their views openly in front of Helen and Priam. Their words are ‘gentle, winged’, not hostile as some students thought, but the old men see Helen as dangerous, the cause of great suffering because of her beauty, which is the beauty of a goddess, and they want Helen to be returned to Menelaus and an end brought to Troy’s suffering.

Priam is warmer, more welcoming towards Helen, calling her ‘dear child’. He speaks out for all to hear (unlike the murmuring old men), inviting her to sit near him, and telling her that the gods are to blame, not her. Instead, he seeks to draw on her knowledge of the Greek host. Most students saw different attitudes. Few noted that Priam’s confidence to speak openly may have been the only real difference.

Question 1c.

Students found plenty to write about here. Many compared the old men with Nestor and Chryses in Book 1, and Helen with Chryseis and Briseis. An added bonus was the identification of Agamemnon as the ‘tremendous fighter’, though few noted the irony of this. He looks like a leader, but is he one?

Aged warriors, past their prime, are no longer able to win renown in battle. This separates the old men of Troy from the heroes. The nature of heroes was much discussed, as was leadership. Priam’s treatment of the old Trojans was contrasted with Agamemnon’s treatment of Chryses in Book 1.

The power of Helen’s beauty and its destructiveness was often noted. The status of women, exemplified by Helen and by Chryseis and Briseis in Book 1, shows them to be hostages to the passions of men, taken as trophies, highly valued, but treated as objects to fight over.

Priam, the patriarch, suggests that there are deeper forces at work in events than decisions by mortals. Many responses made much of divine interference and responsibility.

Low-scoring responses did not refer to other parts of the prescribed text.

Sophocles, *Antigone*

Question 2a.

Some students felt the need to recount the quarrel between Eteocles and Polynices, but most began their ‘circumstances’ with Creon denying burial to the traitor and his reasons for doing so. High-scoring answers highlighted the pressure Creon was under, especially when publicly confronted by his defiant niece. Some very good answers focused on the way Haemon addresses his father, the reason why he is both placatory and aggrieved: he loves both Antigone and Creon.

Haemon approaches his father hoping to persuade him to relent and reconsider the death penalty he has imposed on Antigone. Antigone acted in defiance of Creon’s decree and Creon insists that she suffer the full penalty when she defends her brazen action. Creon fears traitors within the city and his recently acquired grasp on power is shaky. He cannot tolerate defiance from anybody. Haemon is betrothed to Antigone and clearly loves her. He also loves his father and his approach is deferential at first, praising Creon and declaring his obedience to him. However, in this speech he makes his views clear – Creon must bend.

Question 2b.

Those students who knew the play well were able to detail Creon’s response specifically. Others resorted to using generalisations.

Creon’s response is arrogant and angry. ‘Am I to be lectured by a boy?’ he asks. There is a rapid-fire series of exchanges (stychomythia), with Haemon becoming more and more furious. Creon calls Antigone’s action treason,

which Haemon disputes. Haemon claims the support of the city and Creon retorts that he will not be told how to rule, it is an affront to the dignity of his age and the city belongs to him. In his frustration, Haemon speaks sarcastically and Creon is abusive. Creon distances himself from his son and blames the influence of Antigone. At the end of the recriminations, Haemon rushes out when Creon threatens to execute Antigone in front of him.

Question 2c.

Quite a few students saw divine law versus state law as the main idea in the extract. There were also thoughtful answers that dealt with the wielding of power. How should a king behave? Who should he listen to? When should a ruler be flexible? In creating this scene, the characters, and their motives and emotions, and letting them be played out, Sophocles has used the technique known as *agon*. Haemon is a persuasive, though emotional, speaker.

Haemon's speech explores the relationship between leadership and public opinion, specifically the need for rulers to listen and take account of the views of the ruled. It is carefully constructed and uses a number of persuasive devices: characterisation of 'the man in the street' and his reported speech, rhetorical questions and analogies.

Some weaker responses focused on one idea only and some did not address techniques.

Aristophanes, *The Birds*

Question 3a.

The circumstances include the reasons for the departure of Peisthetaerus and Euelpides from Athens, their choice of Tereus as the best authority to consult about finding a suitable city, and the brilliant idea that occurs to Peisthetaerus. Some answers omitted important details, but most were thorough.

The following is an example of a good response.

Peisthetaerus and Euelpides are fed up with Athens with its fines and litigation, and they have come to the Hoopoe for advice on where to find a congenial city. Nothing he suggests appeals to them, but then Peisthetaerus has a brilliant idea – why not build a new city in the sky, a city of birds, since birds seem to live well. The birds' city will have the added advantage of ruling over men. Hoopoe is soon persuaded to support the plan and the birds are summoned to a meeting with Peisthetaerus. Things do not start well because the birds hate humans, but Peisthetaerus is persuasive and the birds agree to hear his plan. Now he makes his pitch.

Question 3b.

Students found this question challenging. It is not always easy to state the obvious. The Chorus gives a bird's view of the nature of men: masters of fraud and deception, smarter than birds, schemers. Then they position the audience and underscore the absurdity of the situation. The Chorus leader engages with the humans and provides a running commentary on the progress of Peisthetaerus's speech. The song at the beginning of the passage indicates that they are ready to listen and no longer bent on fighting the humans, also that they can be persuaded if there is something in it for them – glory and power, for instance. The Chorus leader prompts Peisthetaerus with questions that enable him to reveal the amazing scope of his plan step by step. The tone of the questions is doubtful, and this signals to the audience that something outrageous is being discussed.

Question 3c.

Many responses set out the ideas and techniques in the passage thoroughly. Comedic ideas begin with the absurd situation of an Athenian trying to persuade birds to agree with him. What is comic here and why? Peisthetaerus sends up rhetorical speech. He uses the analogy of working with dough to describe his preparation, he follows the rituals associated with solemn oratory (the wreath and purifying water) and he uses emotive words, hyperbole ('Oh, how I grieve for you birds'). This is both absurd humour and satire. There is a comic inversion of the established order: the birds should rule over the gods. This sets the approach to the treatment of the gods in the remainder of the play. Peisthetaerus takes the claim further, claiming that the sovereignty of the birds predates Kronos, the Titans and even Earth. The Chorus leader is incredulous. His questions enhance the momentum of the speech. Peisthetaerus even invokes Aesop to convince the ill-educated birds of his case.

Techniques that were noted include: fast-paced lyrics, analogy (lump of dough), ritual (wreath and water), hyperbole, in regard to reference to Aesop, comic interjection ('What a lark!' – a play on words), joke (woodpecker), characterisation, of Peisthetaerus, who is a confident speaker, sure of his powers of persuasion.

Greek freestanding sculpture

Question 4a.

Many students did not say who Eirene and Ploutos were (i.e. anthropomorphic representations of Peace and Wealth). Most knew Hermes and Dionysus, and could name the sculptors to whom the works are usually attributed. Praxiteles was either the son or younger brother of Kephisodotos. Most answers included dates and where the works were displayed.

Question 4b.

Though some students knew that Eirene and Ploutos belonged to the 370s BCE, there was scant knowledge about contemporary events, and even less about the period when Praxiteles produced Hermes and Dionysus in the 340s or 330s BCE. Many attempts to establish the sociohistorical context of Eirene and Ploutos referred to the Peloponnesian War and not the warring between the Greek states in the early 4th century, and the peace between Athens and Sparta of 375 BCE. The students who could place Hermes and Dionysus in a sociohistorical context mentioned the rise of Macedon and the move away from militaristic themes in sculpture.

Question 4c.

While students could identify many techniques, they were less confident in identifying how the techniques related to the artistic period. This question called for comparisons with early and high classical sculpture. The late classical period saw new modes of expression – the female nude, realistic portraiture, and passionate features and poses. The severity and restraint of classical sculpture was abandoned in favour of greater expression, asymmetry and the undulating body seen in Hermes.

There were two common errors: Eirene is not archaic or reaching back to archaic styles and this sculpture is not a good example of the ‘wet drapery’ look. Peace is stately, dressed in a conservative peplos representing dignity, prestige and abundance, possibly also the home, domesticity and modesty. Most responses successfully compared Hermes with figures from the early and high classical periods, often Doryphoros and the Riace warriors.

Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Book 2

Question 5a.

Hector was identified by most students, and his death at the hands of Achilles was recounted, including an explanation for his bloodied and unkempt state. Students were less meticulous in noting his reasons for speaking to Aeneas at this time – yes, the Greeks have entered Troy and it is burning, but that is not all. Aeneas has a particular task to perform: he must save Troy’s sacraments and household gods, and take them with him to establish a great city.

Question 5b.

Patience and thoroughness were required when analysing this extended simile. Aeneas is the shepherd. What does this imply? The Greeks are wildfire and a mountain river in flood. What features do they share with these natural phenomena?

The following is an example of a simple analysis.

Troy is like the croplands in that it is fertile and productive, yet doomed for destruction.

The Greeks are like a fire or flood in that they are destructive and overwhelming. Like floods and fires, they are forces of nature and there is an element of inevitability in the destruction they are about to cause.

Aeneas is like a shepherd. As one individual, he is unable to stop a natural disaster. As a shepherd, he has a responsibility for his flock (the Trojans). Aeneas is a guardian whose job is to keep them safe. However, just as the shepherd is dumbfounded and too stunned to act, so too is Aeneas, frozen and incapable of acting.

Question 5c.

Students who knew the book well were able to explain that Hector’s shade is the first of three supernatural visitors to Aeneas who try to advise him. They also knew how Aeneas responded to the situation and his eventual acceptance of the task before him.

The highest-scoring answers noted that Aeneas is telling Dido the story of the fall of Troy. He has explained the device of the Trojan horse and now describes his responses when he wakes from his dream of Hector to find the Greeks have

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thrown open the gates and the city is in chaos. In recollecting these scenes, he is dramatic and honest about his confusion at the time.

Students described an impetuous Aeneas, driven by his emotions, who forgets Hector's message and launches into battle. The extract shows that Aeneas is not yet ready for his great responsibility and Book 2 bears this out.

Many responses focused on Augustus and sociohistorical material, but the chief focus should have been on Aeneas and his actions in the book.

Caesar, *The Conquest of Gaul*, Books 4 and 5

Questions 6a.–c.

Very few students attempted the analysis of the extract from *The Conquest of Gaul* this year.

The circumstances are that the Romans had retired to their winter camp, been attacked by Ambiorix and tricked by him into surrendering. The relationship between the extract and its sociohistorical context turns on the political ambitions and machinations of Caesar at the time. Why did he write *The Conquest of Gaul* when he did and what point is he making in this particular extract? In relation to the qualities of the Romans and Gauls, most answers highlighted the bravery of the Romans in the face of poor leadership and Gallic treachery.

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*

Question 7a.

Knowledge of Ovid's account of the folktale is tested here. Most students knew Echo's fate and explained it well.

Narcissus has played with Echo's emotions and now she lives a solitary existence in caves. Despite this, Echo's love for Narcissus remains. Her beauty becomes wrinkled and wasted, and her bones are reduced to stone. Eventually she has no body at all, only a voice.

Most students answered this question well. Echo had already been punished by the goddess Juno because Echo would detain her with endless talk, enabling the nymphs who consorted with Jupiter to flee. The nature of the punishment was that Echo would merely return sound and have the briefest possible use of her voice.

Question 7b.

Again, this question was well answered, often quite lyrically. Students should not just identify similes and metaphors, they should explain how these work. What does Narcissus have in common with a statue carved from Parian marble? Good responses also explained the thirst for his own image – the 'twin stars that were his eyes', his 'ivory neck', the 'rosy flush' on the 'snowy whiteness' of his complexion, 'the flame with which he burned', and the reflection/shadow.

Question 7c.

Most students had a general understanding of the outcome. It was the detail provided that made the difference between good and excellent responses. The extract explores the dangers of vain love. The rest of the story shows Narcissus embracing death, rather than continuing a life in bondage. His physical form is utterly consumed by extreme desire for himself. The wood nymphs and Echo are left to grieve. High-scoring student responses gave evidence of the power and insanity of love, the inability to resist desire, resignation, acceptance of death as an outcome, loss of beauty and being consumed by love.

Triumphal arches

Question 8a.

This question was answered well. Most students knew that the Arch of Constantine commemorated his victory over the usurper Maxentius at Milvian Bridge and the significance of this event for Rome – it brought Constantine closer to sole rule and the end of Diocletian's Tetrarchy. Its significance in Constantine's conversion to Christianity is disputed, but students who supported their claims won their point. Many students displayed detailed knowledge of the frieze under the roundels and described it well.

Question 8b.

This question required detailed knowledge of the figures and scenes on the arch – there are actually quite a few religious features. Many students overlooked the second part of the question. The features reveal Roman reverence for traditional forms in recognising achievement and their reverence for the good emperors.

The words *instinctu divinitas* on the inscription, meaning ‘inspired by the divine’, have sometimes been understood to be indicative of the religious conversion of Constantine. Some students overplayed the Christian elements and neglected the pagan ones. There are no unambiguously Christian symbols on the arch (Constantine supported the Christian Church from 312 BCE, but did not convert until 322 BCE). Among the features students identified were: Sol (rising) and Luna on chariots (Constantinian roundels on short sides of the arch), and sacrifices to Apollo, Diana, Hercules and Silvanus (Hadrianic roundels). There are also Trajanic reliefs inside the arch.

Question 8c.

Some students had very detailed knowledge of the spolia and gave good reasons for their use: to provide historical comparison with the golden eras of Rome, economic reasons, to meet a deadline and the lack of skilled relief sculptors. All reasons were accepted if supported. Among the work re-used, students found: Trajanic figures on the architraves of columns and reliefs on the short side of the attic, Hadrianic roundels, Aurelian reliefs, and works probably from Domitian’s time. Only the highest-scoring responses described the ways in which the spolia were adapted to the purposes and design of the arch.

Section B – Comparative study

Question chosen	none	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
%	1	17	19	29	2	11	6	16	1

Many essays appeared to be general comparisons between the prescribed texts that were adapted loosely to fit the question. Although such essays demonstrated considerable knowledge of the texts and their sociohistorical contexts, quite often there was no clear argument dealing with the statement in the topic. Sociohistorical material should be prepared in advance, but not all such information is relevant. The student needs to select facts that support their argument.

While there may have been improvement in students’ knowledge, there is a need to focus more on argument. There were too many unsupported observations, too often a point was claimed without evidence being presented. It is better to produce a convincing argument than a broad survey of a work.

Above all, students are urged to explore the society and the times in which the works were produced, and the values and concerns of the classical writers and artists who produced them.

Students should look closely at the statement in the question when they plan their essay. Too many students accepted the statement as true without examining it. Question 2 was misunderstood by a few students, who discussed the religious faith of Aeschylus and Plato.

Criterion 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	3	2	2	8	11	14	16	21	13	7	3	5.9

Most students demonstrated knowledge of the texts and their sociohistorical contexts. Few students ignored the sociohistorical context, though much of the sociohistorical material was not closely related to the essay’s argument. Responses to Question 3 generally lacked sociohistorical material about women and few essays on Question 2 mentioned the reforms of Ephialtes in 462 BCE. The knowledge demonstrated was reasonably accurate. Some students were able to quote abundantly from both texts.

Criterion 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	3	3	6	10	13	11	20	18	9	5	2	5.3

It is better to examine the texts closely than stand at a distance making general observations. Evidence selected from the text should be the most relevant. There was quite a lot of reference to Juvenal’s Satire VI, which has a great deal to say about women and nothing about freedmen, slaves and foreigners. There was also considerable reference to the Persian Wars in Herodotus despite the fact that the prescribed parts of the work are not about those wars.

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Analysis of a single passage or character is not enough. Some essays referred only to a single episode, for example Pericles's Funeral Oration in Thucydides, and ignored the other prescribed passages. Powerful women were not limited to Tullia and Poppaea; Lucretia was also, arguably, powerful.

Those who wrote about Livy, Herodotus and Thucydides often made good use of their stated aims and methods in the introductions to their works. Others asserted that both Herodotus and Thucydides present arguments, but they did not state what the arguments were. Many students told the story thoroughly, analysed the characters and explained causes without identifying the underlying purpose.

Analogy, metaphor and dialogue are techniques, but genre is often overlooked. Genre was particularly important to essays dealing with *The Eumenides* and *The Apology*. Tragedy retells myth and Socratic dialogue records the words of Socrates in conversation – two very different teaching techniques. Also, students needed to explore the basis of faith in one's community.

Few essays conveyed the mentality of Juvenal, beyond stating that he hated everybody. Few explored the differences in attitude and motivation between Cicero and Sallust towards the Roman aristocracy, preferring to simply identify differences in their representations of figures, such as Catiline.

Criterion 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	3	3	5	14	11	12	19	17	9	4	2	5.3

Students adopted one of two approaches: either they interwove comparison throughout the essay or they dealt with the texts in order then added a paragraph of specific comparison. Both methods worked. The first method tends to produce more and deeper comparison, but this method also makes it more difficult to keep the essay on topic.

Some texts were easier to compare, but there was often superficial comparison. With Andromache and Penelope, for example, the 'good wife' was well explored, but both characters are more than just this. Many students quoted Andromache's observation that one night in a man's bed erases a woman's revulsion without noting that in the context of her speech this was extremely ironic and unlikely to happen.

Criterion 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	3	3	4	12	13	17	16	17	9	4	2	5.3

Students should not treat the statement as a prompt. It is a claim to be challenged and debated.

Most students knew that Herodotus does more than describe the past, but there was an unquestioned acceptance of the claim that both Homer and Euripides direct women to be faithful to their husbands when, in fact, neither of them does. The fact that they present loyal wives does not imply a moral requirement of fidelity. Euripides shows that loyalty brings no reward and Homer shows how very risky it is.

Most essays responding to Question 7 were comfortable with competition serving the living, but considered the needs of the dead only cursorily.

To score well on this criterion, the student needed to argue a case throughout their essay and produce sufficient relevant evidence to support it. Some essays lacked evidence and contained few quotes or references to specific passages. Some students did not argue a case or wandered away from their argument.

A simple opening statement, such as the following example, can set up an essay.

Herodotus argues that fortunes change, the mighty fall. He selects his material in Book 1 of The Histories to support this case. Thucydides is more subtle; he claims to be an objective recorder of events, but his selection and ordering of material belies his claim to objectivity. He aims to show us how desperate humans are.