

2015 Classical Studies examination report

General comments

Students performed well on the 2015 Classical Studies examination. Most students showed that they had studied the prescribed works carefully and wrote detailed answers to most questions. Weaknesses lay in the relevance of material that students included in their answers, and their skill in constructing convincing and informed arguments in Section B. Addressing all four Section B assessment criteria in a balanced way while adhering to an argument requires practice. Students were quick to display their knowledge and broad understanding but often did not include the evidence to support their claims. The highest-scoring responses included this evidence and also showed a sophisticated awareness of the values and dominant ideas of classical cultures.

Most students attempted all parts of the questions they responded to, and most students finished the exam. A small number of students answered more Section A questions than was necessary and this resulted in less detailed responses in all areas. In these instances, only the first two Section A responses were assessed.

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 resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

Section A – Individual study

Question chosen	none	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
%	1	40	19	4	15	8	0	2	11

Part a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	5	5	14	31	29	16	3.3

Part b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	4	8	25	36	20	7	2.8

Part c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	3	5	9	13	15	15	16	14	7	2	1	4.7

The passages and images were well used, although some students were not confident about discussing material that was outside the passage for analysis. Some students responding to questions that asked for an analysis of ideas often answered with storytelling – this applied particularly to part c. questions. Students should be made aware that the significance of a passage lies in the ideas and techniques in it, and in its relation to other passages.

Question 1

Homer, *The Iliad*, Book 1 (pp. 77–87) and Book 3 (pp. 128–144)

Question 1a.

Most students scored very well on this question, quoting appropriately from the passage and explaining the image of the lion and the handsome carcass. Higher-scoring responses analysed in detail the descriptive language and images Homer uses. Several students made interesting observations about the implications of 'loping', applied to Paris. Only a few students responded too briefly without examining the two contrasted characters in detail.

Question 1b.

Some students did not read the question carefully and wrote about the techniques used in the whole passage rather than in Hector's speech. Some started with 'direct speech' as a technique, but might have noted that the use of speech allows Homer to characterise three different subjects: Hector, Paris and their relationship.

Some responses were limited in identifying techniques because they considered only the character's techniques, not Homer's. Such techniques included sarcasm, irony, rhetorical question, juxtaposition, contrast and insult. If Homer's techniques are considered, characterisation comes into play too. Hector was mentioned by Achilles in Book 1, but this is his first appearance and his first speech. What does Homer tell us about him? Character is created when the character speaks.

Question 1c.

Low-scoring responses attempted to address the significance of the passage without reference to other prescribed sections of *The Iliad*. Slightly higher-scoring responses argued that the significance of the passage lay in what followed Hector's berating of Paris, and proceeded to relate the events of Book 3, especially the intervention of Aphrodite, but often there was too much storytelling and not enough ideas. High-scoring responses focused on the characteristics of the hero, comparing Paris, Menelaus and Hector to Achilles, Agamemnon and Nestor in Book 1, the actions that brought them into conflict and the forms that conflict took. 'Women as trophies' was frequently mentioned, but it was a common mistake to refer to the 'capture' of Helen by Paris, and Paris's transgression of *xenia*, neither of which occurs in *The Iliad*.

Question 2

Sophocles, 'Antigone'

Question 2a.

Most answers began with the war and the deaths of Eteocles and Polynices, then proceeded to Creon's edict and his response to Antigone's act of civil disobedience. Many continued with a summary of Haemon's conversation with his father. However, few students showed specific understanding of the circumstances by referring to the speech of Tiresias that precedes the passage and explains what has brought the seer to Creon, and the king's testy response. More detailed knowledge would have produced a more comprehensive answer.

Question 2b.

Some students appeared to be unprepared for a question about sociohistorical context and did not answer confidently. Higher-scoring responses identified four issues that were relevant to mid-century Athens: the threat of tyranny to the democracy; responsibilities towards the dead; the obedience of citizens to the state; and faith in oracles, omens and signs. There were some unsupported assertions about the spread of atheism at the time. Those who mentioned humanism were more persuasive but they often didn't explain what they meant by this term. The best evidence included references to ostracism, the illegality of burying traitors in Athenian soil and doubts about oracles following Delphi's prediction of a Persian victory in 480 BCE. Some students mistakenly identified *phusis* with divine law.

Many students provided broad sociohistorical context, but they found it difficult to link it to the extract. Many students did not appear to be practised in discussing sociohistorical matters in relation to a Sophocles passage.

Question 2c.

Most students performed ably on this question, giving equal attention to ideas and techniques. The ideas of corruption, wisdom, prophecy, the tyrant, the power of the gods and the treatment of dead traitors were explained carefully. Techniques included metaphor ('*you shoot your arrows*'), invective, imagery and stichomythia. Several high-scoring responses paid particular attention to the image of Zeus's eagles winging carrion to the throne of god, with its suggestion that Creon is disparaging accepted religious ideas.

Question 3

Aristophanes, 'Wasps'

Question 3a.

Many students found this question challenging. The choral ode preceding the passage is a minor one that few knew well, but most responses correctly suggested that the Chorus is in agreement with Bdelycleon after their earlier antagonism, and the change of attitude stems from the debate with Philocleon, which Bdelycleon clearly won. Most students lent weight to their answers by describing the 'wasps' of the first scene attacking Bdelycleon and his servants for imprisoning their fellow juror, then being persuaded by his arguments and praising him for taking such care of his father. In the choral ode they join with Bdelycleon in a prayer to Apollo that Philocleon will become more docile in his attitude, but few students communicated this specific information.

Question 3b.

Most students were able to show a knowledge of the political situation in Athens in 422 BCE, nine years into the Peloponnesian War, including the dominance and tactics of the demagogues led by Cleon, the operation of the law courts and the classes of the city. They noted that the two dogs were thinly disguised representations of the general Laches and Cleon, and the trial was a mock version of litigation brought by Cleon against Laches a couple of years before in relation to a military campaign in Sicily that Laches had led. The willingness of Philocleon to pre-judge the case illustrates Aristophanes's beliefs about the behaviour of jurors.

Question 3c.

Ideas about justice in Athens are expressed through satire and absurd humour. The ideas were identified confidently – for example, corruption in the law courts in various forms – but students had difficulty identifying and describing the effects of comic techniques, which weakened their answers. The highest-scoring answers focused on the characterisation of Philocleon, the innocent old rogue, to illustrate the immoral ways that were now accepted behaviour in Athens (according to Aristophanes).

Question 4

Greek free-standing sculpture of the early classical, classical and late classical periods (490–323 BCE)

Question 4a.

Students who identified the works, the sculptors and the periods they belonged to earned full marks. They were, respectively, the Doryphoros by Polykleitos of the high classical period and the Apoxyomenos by Lysippos of the late classical period. Most also provided dates.

Question 4b.

Some answers were based entirely on analysis of the images on the examination, while other answers were informed by prior knowledge about the works, and these latter responses were clearly superior. Similarities abounded. Among the differences identified was Apoxyomenos's fig leaf, about which some students developed interesting theories; however, the fig leaf is a later addition from the Christian era and it is not present in other Roman copies of the work. Naturalism, the proportions of the body, contrapposto and chiasmic structure were all discussed capably.

Question 4c.

This question called for an exploration of the nature and influence of Polykleitos's Canon and Lysippos's response to it. Many responses repeated material used in Question 4b., but a description of features does not establish significance. Higher-scoring answers made comparisons with other sculptures of the classical and late classical periods.

Question 5

Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Book 2

Question 5a.

Students knew that Laocoon was opposed to bringing the horse into Troy. Some knew that he had pierced the side of the horse with his spear and told the Trojans they were mad to consider bringing the horse into their city. To score well, students needed to spell out the warnings of Sinon – that the horse was built by the Greeks to placate Minerva, that it was a sacred guardian and that terrible destruction would befall the Trojans if anybody damaged it. The Trojans would naturally

conclude that Minerva had sent the serpents against Laocoon because he attempted to damage the horse, bearing out Sinon's story.

Question 5b.

The passage gave students an opportunity to closely examine the poet's techniques and they did this well. Most focused on the description of the serpents, with their coils, blood-flecked eyes, hissing and licking lips. Some noted the 'authorial' comment of Aeneas ('I shudder at the memory') and the responses of the Trojans ('grew pale at the sight and ran in all directions'). Many saw pathos in the seizure of Laocoon's sons, and irony in the fact that Laocoon was sacrificing a huge bull when the serpents came and he became the sacrifice, bellowing like a bull, at the end.

Question 5c.

Most students were able to give some account of the significance of this extract, though often it was limited to noting that these events were necessary for Troy to fall, which was fated. Higher-scoring responses recognised that it was not necessary for the fall of Troy, but it was part of Virgil's discussion of fate. Laocoon is a pious man who stands against fate and with his death all hope for the city is lost. Virgil describes Laocoon as a virtuous and truthful man who reads the horse correctly as a Greek plot. He is contrasted with the cunning deceiver Sinon, who spins out an elaborate lie, which Minerva endorses so dramatically with the serpents. When the gods have decided a city's fate, virtue and truth are no protection. Few students noted that in Book 2 Aeneas is telling Dido of the fall of Troy, and there is a hidden warning to her in the account: what is fated will be.

Question 6

Cicero, 'In defence of Marcus Caelius Rufus'

Question 6a.

Cicero adopts the tone of a lenient father – lenient towards the young man who has strayed – while using irony and innuendo to condemn the worldly and immoral widow. His tone previously was that of a very stern, old-fashioned father, a persona he adopted to address Caelius directly.

Question 6b.

Cicero creates a dramatic scene built around the father and the wayward son. The lenient father can find no serious fault in the son. All fault is shifted to Clodia and her wanton behaviour. Innuendo and irony are used when Cicero targets 'someone who bears not the slightest resemblance to her', and he proceeds with a thorough character assassination, detailing her 'calendar of different lovers', a 'wealthy widow behaving riotously'. He appeals to the generosity of the court with a 'boys will be boys' argument. Who has the 'will-power', he asks, to 'reject all pleasures'?

Question 6c.

This is a key part of Cicero's defence of Caelius, where he directs the blame back onto Clodia, the supposed victim in the case. He has dismissed most of the charges as mere slander but chooses to address the accusations that Caelius stole gold from Clodia and procured poison to murder her. Perhaps because the evidence was against his client, he doesn't address the charges directly. Instead he focuses his attack on Clodia herself, disparaging her character and making snide remarks about her private life, going so far as accusing her of incest. He adopts different personas (the noble ancestor; the stern, old-fashioned father; and the lenient modern one) to keep the attention of his listeners and to sustain his case wittily, but this is arguably a distraction from the actual facts of the case. His innuendo and many references to rumour and scandal such as those

in the passage ('home and house at Baiae were thrown wide open to every sort of lecherous riff-raff) may have contributed to the acquittal of Caelius but it isn't honest argument.

Question 7

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*

Question 7a.

Answers usually began with the capture of Silenus, and Midas recognising him. The death of Orpheus and Bacchus's revenge against the Thracians was rarely mentioned as it was outside the prescribed section, despite the fact it sets the tone of violent excess and explains the opening lines of the passage. The behaviour of Bacchus prepares the reader for what is to come.

Question 7b.

Students were able to identify and discuss a variety of techniques. Mostly the techniques were specific to the depiction of Midas, dwelling on his foolish joy. Some described this as dramatic irony because the reader knows something that the innocent character doesn't; this was a good observation. The building of tension, the ordering of the things touched and oxymorons ('baneful gift' and 'delighted with the misfortune') were all mentioned, leading to the dramatic conclusion with its vivid imagery of a greedy man swallowing molten gold.

Question 7c.

Most students agreed that Ovid explores the idea that mortals should be careful in their dealings with gods. Midas has a very limited understanding of his mortal limitations but Bacchus doesn't feel any need to protect him from his foolishness – he is a party god. The story of Midas is a warning to us all not to covet things that will harm us. Gold can't replace the essential things we need, such as food. Common sense tells us that. The compassion of the gods cannot be taken for granted but Bacchus is happy to restore Midas to normal human conditions on request. Few responses alluded to the generosity of Bacchus after the passage and the fact that gods can be compassionate. Fewer still referred to other prescribed stories where mortals were foolish in their choices.

Question 8

Triumphal arches

Question 8a.

Most students identified the arch as the Arch of Tiberius but not all addressed the significance of the location of the arch. Higher-scoring answers mentioned the founding of Arausio by the Second Legion, the location of the arch in the town, the proximity to the theatre, the Via Agrippa and the fact that the arch was a landmark representing Roman power on the frontier of the empire.

Question 8b.

Most students handled this question confidently. They noted the lack of a dedication and difficulty interpreting inscriptions, a lack of identifiable figures in the relief sculptures and the alterations made at different times.

Question 8c.

This question required an examination of both the architecture and the sculpture. Most responses noted the double attic and triple arch as architectural 'controversies'. Some commented on the crowded style of the artwork. The highest-scoring responses were those that stated that the arch was different to the other arches studied and then used the other arches to help prove this,

especially drawing attention to the sculpture. The image showed how unusual the relief sculpture is, yet many students made no comment on it.

Section B – Comparative study

Question chosen	none	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
%	1	10	25	34	1	14	5	9

Students were generally aware of the criteria and tried to meet them. Essays were lengthy and they contained plenty of information. Higher-scoring responses addressed the statement, did not deviate from the topic under discussion and constructed a cohesive argument. Lower-scoring responses presented material that was irrelevant.

Most essays addressed the sociohistorical contexts of the works but at times sociohistory did not appear to be directly linked to the essay topic. Many students provided a great deal of biographical information about authors, leaving little time for analysis and comparison of the texts.

Most students were able to give broad overviews of the texts but they were less able to give specific examples and quotes to show a more detailed knowledge and understanding. On the other hand, a number of responses narrated parts of the text rather than analysing them.

Some responses began by arguing one point of view but then made different and even contradictory arguments.

There were frequent attempts to define terms, but these were not always successful. Several responses to Question 1 went to lengths to define 'misfortune' but overlooked 'authoritative leader'.

Students should not simply accept the statement as true, nor the terms of the statement as understood.

Criterion 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	1	2	3	7	9	15	19	23	15	5	3	6.1

This was the best-addressed criterion. Students demonstrated that they knew the works and most remembered to establish the sociohistorical contexts of the works in their essays. Students were more successful in linking sociohistory to the essays on the Herodotus and Thucydides pairing and the Livy and Tacitus pairing.

There were a few students who did not address the sociohistorical context, and some essays on the Roman pairings presumed knowledge of the sociohistory, referring to events without explaining their relevance.

Criterion 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	2	4	6	10	15	24	18	11	5	2	5.7

Students who displayed knowledge about the texts and scored well on Criterion 1 often lacked knowledge of the ideas in the texts and performed less well on this criterion. Several essays were so focused on the lives and times of Juvenal and Petronius that they scarcely mentioned evidence from the prescribed works. The evidence of Juvenal's misogyny was cited more often than Rome's moral turpitude.

Some responses to Question 7 were vague about the funeral games, with few mentions of specific events. Students who explored the idea that *The Aeneid* is looking towards the future of Rome discussed the parade of Roman boys led by Iulus/Ascanius. Similarly, high-scoring responses explored Achilles's future and his fate to die at Troy via the importunate request for burial of the ghost of Patroclus. They also noted the reconciliation of Agamemnon and Achilles.

Other interesting ideas included the absence of authoritative leaders in both Herodotus's and Thucydides's work (Question 1) and the comparison of the destitute but cunning Odysseus and the beleaguered but cunning Penelope in *Odyssey*, Book 19. A few students noted that the unjust outcome in Socrates's trial was partly due to his rejection of any compromise.

Discussion of techniques was limited in most essays, yet this is essential when paired texts belong to different genres. For example, the compromise achieved by Athena in 'The Eumenides' was not possible in a Socratic dialogue purporting to be an account of actual court proceedings.

Criterion 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	3	2	5	8	13	15	22	15	12	4	1	5.5

Students tended to make comparisons wherever they arose but many added specific comparative paragraphs at the end of their essays. This worked well. Students used language such as 'on the other hand' and 'whereas', which were good ways to signal comparisons. Higher-scoring responses supported complex comparison throughout their essays and were able to link their comparison to sociohistorical change, or alternatively were able to give sociohistorical reasons for the differences or similarities between the texts.

Some students favoured one of the texts, which they were able to discuss in excellent detail, but spent few words on the other text. This happened more often in the Aeschylus and Plato pairing (Question 2) and the Homer and Virgil pairing (Question 7), and to a lesser extent in the Euripides and Homer pairing (Question 3). Some of the highest-scoring comparison was made in responses to Question 6 on Juvenal and Petronius, where Juvenal was characterised as embittered and Petronius as amoral, and these characterisations were sustained successfully through detailed comparisons of their works.

Criterion 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	2	4	6	11	19	19	18	12	5	2	5.7

Simply accepting the statement as true continues to be the most common error students make in their approach to the essay. The second error is failing to examine the key words and provide definitions of them. For example, 'compromise' needed definition in any response to Question 2, and responses to Question 5 needed to begin by saying who the 'Roman elite' were. In Question 6 students should have defined what the Roman moral values were.

Many students agreed that authoritative leaders were the best defence against misfortune (Question 1) but then found no solid evidence to support their position. They would have seen the problem with supporting this position if they had defined 'authoritative leader'.

The following is an example of a paragraph that puts the student in a strong position to argue a case.

Authoritative leaders are ones who know what is best for the people they lead and who might be expected to provide a defence against misfortune. There is no character in the extract from Herodotus' Histories who fits that description precisely. Solon, the wise man of Athens comes

closest, since he is the only one who appears to have thought deeply about misfortune. In Thucydides' extracts one leader is identified – Pericles – but his actions don't provide his people with a defence against misfortune at all. His policies, indirectly, gave them the plague. On the basis of the passages studied from The Histories and The History of the Peloponnesian War, I would reject the statement.

Some essays responding to Question 3 discussed the loyalty of women rather than their power. These students may have been comfortable with the subject of loyalty and were drifting back into familiar material. Others did not address both parts of the topic; for example, they made this an essay about the 'role of women' and did not address whether or not men trusted women.

Sometimes students overlooked material in the prescribed texts that supported their arguments. In response to Question 5 few students showed awareness of the authors' 'prologues', which underpin their aims as historians.

Occasionally students overused Greek terms that remained undefined, such as *ekphrasis*, *nomos*, *sophrosyne* and *peripeteia*. Students should only use Greek or Latin terms that they are prepared to define.