2024 VCE Classical Studies external assessment report

General comments

The 2024 VCE Classical Studies examination consisted of two sections:

* Section A – Individual study: students were asked to answer three questions on each of two works they have studied from a selection of eight works, covering both the written and material culture of the classical world.
* Section B – Comparative study: students were asked to choose one pair of works from eight pairs provided and to compare and contrast the ideas in their selected pair. They were assessed using the expected qualities published on the VCAA website at <https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/exams/classical/ClassicalStudies-crit-descriptors-w.pdf>. These criteria are to be used only until December 2024.

Overall, students demonstrated a clear knowledge of the classical cultures, the written and material works, and the requirements of the different sections of the examination. However, time management seemed to be an issue for many students. Some sections were incomplete or included very brief responses, which meant that students could not show their understanding of the questions and the works.

In Section A, students are reminded to use the mark allocation of the questions to help them determine the length of their response and how much time to spend on it. Many students included information such as the sociohistorical context of the works where they were not asked to do so, resulting in less time spent on providing the information required by the question. Students are advised to read the three questions carefully for each work they choose during reading time and to plan what information they will use for each question from the passage/material culture included in the examination and the whole work/collection of prescribed works. Many students repeated points across two questions, meaning that they did not fully address the requirements of the question, instead repeating points they had already made.

Some students did not clearly number the questions they were answering, instead just leaving a line or two between paragraphs. This made it difficult for assessors at times to discern whether the student had moved on to the next question or was writing another point for the same question.

In Section B, students are encouraged to pay close attention to the wording of the question. Some students did not clearly convey their understanding of key terms from the questions, such as what desires they were discussing, or they discussed knowledge generally rather than focusing on its misuse, or whether the actions discussed were transgressive or not. Responses that set up a clear argument based on the terms of the question scored more highly, whereas those that disregarded the question and wrote an essay on a topic about which they had previously written in the examination were awarded lower scores. Many of the questions included absolute terms such as ‘only’ and ‘no one’, encouraging students to present arguments that disagreed with these statements. Students are reminded that they can either fully or partially agree or disagree with the question.

Section B required a comparative essay, but some students failed to compare beyond the occasional use of a word or phrase such as ‘likewise’, ‘similarly’ or ‘on the other hand’ at the start of a paragraph. High-scoring responses compared the two works in terms of ideas and techniques throughout the essay. Many high-scoring responses were able to explore how genre and/or the sociohistorical context influenced the different approaches to the ideas being discussed, even if the works were presenting similar arguments.

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 of more or less than 100 per cent.

Section A – Individual study

First selection

Part a.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
| % | 0.8 | 5 | 24 | 39 | 31 | 3.0 |

Part b.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Average |
| % | 2 | 2 | 18 | 35 | 27 | 12 | 3 | 3.3 |

Part c.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 3 | 2 | 4 | 11 | 18 | 24 | 18 | 11 | 6 | 1 | 0.4 | 4.9 |

Second selection

Part a.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Average |
| % | 3 | 8 | 26 | 36 | 26 | 2.8 |

Part b.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Average |
| % | 4 | 4 | 18 | 34 | 24 | 12 | 3 | 3.2 |

Part c.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 8 | 2 | 4 | 13 | 15 | 25 | 18 | 10 | 3 | 2 | 0.2 | 4.6 |

In Section A, the responses covered all the Greek works, with The Iliad being the most popular choice, followed by Greek sculptures and Ajax. From the Roman list, The Aeneid and the reliefs were the most popular, with no student writing on Suetonius or Catullus.

Students demonstrated their sound knowledge of the works. Questions about techniques allowed them to show their extensive knowledge of techniques such as dramatic irony, digressions, imagery and sculptural symbolism. However, when the question was ‘to explain the techniques used in the extract’, some students only offered a general definition of a simile, such as ‘a phrase that compares using like’, rather than explaining how the specific simile of the boulder in The Aeneid illustrates ideas about Turnus’s character. Students must also remember that they are dealing with translated works, so referring to punctuation and pauses as techniques were not rewarded as they are the work of the translator, not the original creator of the work.

Part c. often focused on a specific area such as characterisation, beliefs or values that students were required to discuss in relation to both the extract/material culture printed in the examination and the prescribed work as a whole. This meant that students had to provide evidence from other sections of the work or other material culture works from the list, to extend and support their discussion. Higher-scoring responses were able to use the passage / material culture as a starting point for the discussion of the prescribed work as a whole. Some responses only made token references to the broader work, or none at all, which meant that they did not fully address the requirements of part c. of the question.

Homer, The Iliad, Book 22

Question 1a.

As this passage appears towards the end of Book 22, students had a large selection of events to describe in Question 1a.

These included (though not all were expected):

* The Trojan soldiers have withdrawn to safety.
* Hector alone is defending his city.
* Achilles has approached, enraged and seeking vengeance (taunted then by Apollo).
* King Priam and Hecuba have beseeched their son to retreat and not fight Achilles.
* Hector wavers, but after an intense moral internal debate resolves to fight and maintain his heroic honour.
* Achilles pursues Hector around the walls of Troy three times.
* Zeus and Athena discuss Hector’s fate, ultimately deciding to let Athena do her bidding.
* Zeus's scales determine the death of Hector and Apollo leaves him.
* Athena, deceiving Hector by taking the form of his brother Deiphobus, offers false support in the final battle.
* Having realised he was tricked by Athena, with a sense of impending doom, Hector still bravely decides to confront Achilles.
* Hector has sworn that he will treat Achilles's corpse with honour while Achilles, as observed in the passage, gloatingly states that he will not do the same.

Higher-scoring responses were able to show how the events converged to lead to the action described in the passage in the examination. Some responses only referred to the events that occurred just prior to those in the passage, from the start of the duel, and thus were not able to show the sequence of events that led to this scene.

Question 1b.

In Question 1b., students were required to explain the techniques evident in this extract. They needed to identify and explain how the techniques were used by Homer to create this scene. Some responses summarised the paragraph by listing quotes; however, a quote in itself is not a technique. Students must state what Homer’s intent is in the quote to demonstrate that it is a technique. Some responses defined techniques, for example, that a simile is a comparison that uses ‘like’ or ‘as’, rather than explaining how the specific simile works in the passage.

Techniques that could have been discussed included (not all were needed to achieve a high score):

* imagery – for example, the description of the violence towards Hector’s body, reflecting the violence of the Greeks
* symbolism – for example, Hector’s armour, which is stripped by Achilles, symbolically reflecting the removal of Hector’s power and honour
* direct speech – for example, Achilles’s brutal tone towards Hector, revealing his rage
* juxtaposition – for example, the harsh language Achilles uses to refer to Hector versus the softer language he uses when talking about Patroclus, reflecting the complexity of Achilles’s personality
* pathos – for example, the description of Hector as the hero but also as the corpse, emphasising the great loss of Hector
* repetition – for example, the actions of the Greeks towards the body representing the collective violence
* epithet – for example, ‘proud’ runner and ‘magnificent’ Hector
* simile – for example, ‘like a god’ and what that tells us about Hector as he was dead.

Higher-scoring responses demonstrated an understanding of how the techniques worked to convey the characters, plot and ideas in the extract. They explained Homer’s authorial intent in choosing to use these techniques; for example, they could discuss how the focus on Hector’s beauty even as a corpse highlighted the disrespect being inflicted on it by the Greeks, with phrases such as ‘much softer now’.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Homer begins with the brutal vignette of Achilles as he ‘wretched the bronze spear from (Hector’s) corpse’ and ‘ripped the bloody armour off his back’. Homer’s utilisation of vivid imagery illustrates the brutality of Achilles in his endeavours for vengeance and glory, as well as the harsh fate that Hector has succumbed. Despite Hector’s defeat, Homer still emphasises his lasting honour as a hero, as ‘the sons of Achaea … gaze wonderstruck at the build and marvellous lithe body of Hector’. However, this is quickly juxtaposed with the successive invectives of Achilles’ men as they proclaim ‘how much softer he is to handle now, this Hector’. This use of abuse from the poet starkly contrasts Hector’s pervious strength and glory as protector of Troy to the violent suffering bought upon him by the Achaeans. Furthermore, it conveys the savagery of the Achaeans, Achilles at the forefront of this, who have little care for morality and compassion and continue to act maliciously to their enemies in death. The epithet ‘proud runner Achilles’ showcases the martial brilliance of the son of Peleus and celebrates his profound victory in defeating the greatest Trojan warrior. In the direct speech of Achilles, he illustrates the ‘great glory’ that he and his men have achieved. Moreover, Achilles delivers a catalogue of rhetorical questions, stating ‘will they abandon the city heights with this man fallen? Or brace for a last dying stand though Hector is gone?’. Homer’s addition of these devices conveys the sheer dominance the Achaeans have over the Trojans within these moments and emphasises the vulnerable nature of the defenders who are on the verge of defeat. However, Achilles expresses a dramatic shift in tone when remembering the unburied state of his dear friend Patroclus. In a rhetorical question, he criticises his own neglectfulness and ceases his desire to gain further glory ‘but wait, what am I saying?’ In a hyperbolic claim Achilles conveys his profound love for Patroclus, stating that he will ‘never forget him’ even in the house of death where all memory is lost. Finally, Achilles returns to the triumphant tone to reinstate the great victory he has won, doing so through a simile where he notes how Hector was ‘glorified like a god’.

Question 1c.

The passage depicts the culmination of the longstanding conflict between Achilles and Hector, embodying the tragic consequences of war and the inexorable fate that awaits the Trojan hero. Question 1c. enabled students to explore the significance of the passage in terms of the plot, character and/or ideas of the whole of Book 22. Higher-scoring responses tended to look at several of these aspects and explored how this pivotal scene revealed the consequences of earlier scenes and led to later ones.

Areas that could have been explored included (though not all needed to be discussed):

* plot – climactic confrontation between Achilles and Hector, marking a pivotal moment in the narrative
* character – Achilles’s rage and love for Patroclus
* the heroic code and its consequences – both for Hector and his adherence to it and Achilles’s disregard of it
* honour
* the treatment of the dead
* the glory of war
* the cost of war
* the tragedy of Hector/Troy
* the rage of Achilles
* the role of the gods.

Many responses focused on one idea or character, especially what this passage revealed about Achilles and his unyielding nature and how that questioned the heroic code and reflected the cost of war. While many did a very good job on Achilles, they limited their discussion of the events that occurred after this passage, often only referring to the grief of the Trojans to come in one line. This limited their capacity to show a very good understanding of the place of this passage in the whole work as the question demanded. Students who did not refer to events outside the passage or only wrote a few sentences on outside events did not fully address the requirements of the question. Conversely, some students only wrote broadly about events outside the extract and made no connection between the passage and their discussion. Students needed to link specific parts of the extract to the ideas they were discussing.

Herodotus, The Histories

Question 2a.

For Question 2a., students were required to explain the background to this scene.

The background circumstances were:

* Atys is one of two sons
* Croesus’s initial dream that Atys would be killed by a spear
* prevention strategies – the removal of weapons, stopping Atys from taking part in the expedition, finding him a wife
* King Croesus, known for his wealth and power, had sought to marry off his son Atys to maintain and enhance the family's royal standing
* the arrival of Adrastus, as a guest friend of Croesus
* the boar infestation – Atys wants to take part to gain honour.

Some responses focused on Croesus’s overconfidence, which would have been better placed in part c.

Question 2b.

In Question 2b., students were asked to explain how Herodotus created pathos in this passage. Students were able to identify the techniques used, and higher-scoring responses also described how these techniques created pathos.

Techniques that could have been discussed included (not all needed to be discussed to achieve a high score):

* the description of Atys – a figure full of potential, which highlights the sorrow and tragedy of his untimely death
* the use of dialogue and internal reflections – Atys's internal struggles, expressed through his thoughts, provide insight into his mindset and the toll of the impending tragedy
* the familial bonds between Atys and King Croesus – adds a layer of poignancy to the narrative
* the unexpected and divine nature of Atys's death adds a layer of cosmic injustice, intensifying the pathos.

Question 2c.

Atys's and Croesus’s fateful decision in this passage and Atys’s resulting death form part of the larger thematic exploration of hubris in Herodotus's work. Students used this passage as the starting point for their discussion of this broader idea in Question 2c.

Areas that could be explored were (though not all needed to be discussed):

* the role of the gods
* overconfidence leading to disaster
* hubris
* fate
* the downfall of Croesus
* the role of prophecies
* the limitations of wealth.

Higher-scoring responses connected this passage to the overarching story of Croesus and his downfall.

Sophocles, Ajax

Question 3a.

In Question 3a., most students were able to explain the circumstances behind the extract. Higher-scoring responses placed the circumstances within the context of the play, for example, that some of the action occurred off-stage or before the play began and was narrated in the prologue.

The circumstances included:

* Odysseus and Athena are talking at the opening of the play.
* Ajax, the most celebrated warrior after Achilles, has lost a generals’ vote for the award of Achilles’s armour, which has gone to Odysseus, whom he hates.
* Ajax planned to murder the generals / army leaders in revenge, and Athena cast a delusional madness over him to thwart him, causing him to kill sheep and cattle instead, thinking they were the men.
* His sailors (the Chorus) have heard disturbing news of Ajax’s actions, and have come to his hut, where they meet his distraught spear-bride/wife Tecmessa.
* Tecmessa has begun to tell the Chorus about the actions of Ajax and the shame he feels, which is told in the passage provided.

Question 3b.

In Question 3b., students were asked to explain the techniques used in this extract to create tension. Most students were able to correctly identify the techniques used by Sophocles, but many did not connect the techniques to tension.

Techniques that could have been discussed were (not all needed to be discussed to achieve a high score):

* The characterisation of Ajax through his speech and erratic behaviour creates tension as the Chorus and Tecmessa worry about why he is like this and what he will do.
* The use of intense and chaotic language, such as ‘spasms of loud abuse’ and ‘crazily laughing’, creates a sense of unpredictability and unease.
* The repetition of phrases like ‘a wreck amid the wreckage’ emphasises the physical and mental chaos of the scene.
* The inarticulate cries ‘Io, Moi, Moi’ create tension as Ajax is depicted as in such pain that he cannot speak clearly. Higher-scoring responses referred to the stage direction here to explore the idea that ‘we hear but don’t see the hero’.
* Tecmessa’s report creates apprehension as the audience hears her words ‘I took fright’ but do not see Ajax for themselves.
* The visceral imagery of Ajax as a ‘wreck amid the wreckage’ creates tension about what will he do when he has regained his sanity.
* Repetition/emphasis of terms such as howls, wreck, wreckage and wretched, which reflects the extent of the chaos and Ajax’s shame, creating concern about what will happen next.
* The contrast between violence and then inertia described by Tecmessa leads the audience to ponder which direction Ajax will take in the future.
* Tecmessa’s intimation of Ajax’s suicide as ‘some dreadful act’ raises uncertainty.
* Asking for Eurysaces creates tension as the audience is led to wonder why Ajax wants his son.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Sophocles fosters tension in the scene by contrasting the frantic state of Tecmessa to the brutal depictions of Ajax. The animalistic description of Ajax howling in anguish ‘reveal his primal, irrational state of which Tecmessa is deeply afraid. Additionally, the simile of ‘bull like groans’, juxtaposing the current ‘shrill outburst of sorrow’ illustrate that this condition is extreme, even for Ajax. Opposed to these descriptions, Tecmessa pleas to ‘go in and help him’, underscored by a desperate sorrow which demonstrates her frantic fear of Ajax, building on the tension of the scene. Then suddenly exclaiming a flourish of pain ‘Io moi moi’ from Ajax repeatedly create a hyper-anxious scene as he may appear violent at any moment, further exacerbating the stress of the scene. Finally, the frenzied question, contrasting the helpless limitations of Tecmessa ‘Oh god! What can he want? Oh, dear Gods’ express the tension of the scene in her deep fear and stress. Thus, it is evident that Sophocles uses several techniques to build tension in this scene.

Question 3c.

For Question 3c., students often wrote detailed responses, demonstrating a great deal of knowledge of the ideas and issues raised in the passage. However, many responses did not fully address the word ‘significance’. Students needed to ask themselves what would be lost from our understanding of the play if this passage was not there. They also needed to explicitly connect the passage to examples from the rest of the play with phrases like ‘this leads to …’ or ‘this is significant to …’. Some responses did not discuss the rest of the play at all or only in one or two sentences, which meant that they did not fully address the requirements of the question.

Elements of significance could include plot, character development and the development of key ideas, as outlined below:

* Plot – this scene explains the reasons for Ajax’s later suicide and sets up the destructive relationship between the Atridae and Odysseus and Ajax. Odysseus’s actions later in the play reveal that this early depiction of his relationship with Ajax is false.
* Character – this passage reveals a turning point in Ajax’s characterisation. Hitherto known as a traditional Homeric hero, the audience now witnesses a vulnerable and disturbed Ajax, through the eyes of his followers. He is depicted as overcome by shame, which leads to his suicide.
It is also important for the role and character of Tecmessa – her role as a woman in war and the relationship she has with Ajax add pathos to the play as she is a victim of the decisions he makes.
* Issues and ideas
* The changing nature of the hero (heroic code to ‘contemporary’ 5th-century values) – this passage reflects the older values and beliefs that dictate Ajax’s life and death, which Sophocles juxtaposes with those of Odysseus in the rest of the play.
* Moderation/immoderation – the passage shows the extremity not only of Ajax’s actions but also his remorse and shame at what he has done. His attitude to his death as necessary in the next part of the play is based on this extremity and parallelled by the extreme revenge of the Atridae, who refuse his burial. The moderate actions of Teucer and Odysseus about the burial are contrasted with these ideas.
* The changing nature of friendship, and who is friend and who is foe. Ajax’s foes in this passage change as Odysseus will honour Ajax by arguing for his burial.

Greek sculpture

Question 4a.

In response to Question 4a., most students were able to narrate the myth that was depicted in both images. Yet it was also important that students connect their knowledge of the myth to the actual sculptures and events depicted in the images, for example, that the bride struggling against being abducted by the Centaur in image A reflects how the events were centred around a wedding. Most responses tended to make general comments, such as ‘both scenes depict the battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs’. Higher-scoring responses included details such as the fact that the battle occurred at the wedding feast of Pirithous and Hippodamia/Deidemaia and often included the location of the two scenes as well.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Image A is the Temple of Zeus at Olympia West pediment: Lapiths and centaurs, a high relief sculpture made in Early Classical Greece (490–450 BCE). Meanwhile Image B is the Parthenon high relief of Centaurs and Lapiths made in the Classical period (450–400 BCE) by Pheidias. Both depict a scene from the centauromachy where the fight between the Centaurs and Lapiths occurs after the wedding of Deidemaia and Perithoos. Image A the Centaur on the right-hand side is depicted taking hold of a female figure in an act of sexual assault. The female figure pushes back on the centaur with her left elbow smashing him in the face. Her figure twists as she tries to break away from his grip. In Image B a Lapith is depicted in a stretched pose grabbing a centaur on the right by his horn and another arm of the Lapith is outstretched. The centaur leans his body back in agony as he reaches towards his back where the warrior has plunged his sword.

Question 4b.

Students who completed Question 4b. demonstrated their knowledge of the techniques of the periods well. They were able to talk about the drapery, contrapposto and musculature and how these techniques were used to create the images. However, many students discussed the techniques in each image but did not compare them as required by the question. Higher-scoring responses selected a few key techniques and compared how they were used in both sculptures rather than list all possible techniques.

Some of the points of comparison were:

* the different kinds of movement
* the drapery
* the musculature
* the composition and use of space
* the use of / working within the limitations of the shape of metope/pediment
* the depictions of male versus female.

Some responses focused on the actual construction methods of the pieces, that is, the chiselling out of the objects, which limited their discussion and prevented them from achieving a high score.

Question 4c.

For Question 4c., students were required to evaluate how the sculptures reflected the beliefs of Greek society. Most students were able to talk about the belief in Greek civilisation and superiority over the Barbarians. However, many responses did not refer to other works besides the Apollo from the Temple of Zeus to develop this idea.

Many responses focused on the themes of the sculptures rather than the societal beliefs that underpinned the themes. Thus, students who talked about Greek sculptures praising athleticism in men, rather than the ideal of arete and the need for men to be excellent in all things including athleticism, did not fully address the requirements of the question.

Possible beliefs included:

* civilisation versus barbarism
* moderation versus excess
* the role of the gods (both on temples), divine punishment, ways to honour the gods (including through temple architecture)
* the expectations of women and men (domesticity, arete).

Many responses did not refer to other sculptures or did so in a few lines only, repeating points that they had already made in their response to Question 4b. They were therefore unable to achieve a high score as they had not fully addressed the requirements of the question.

Virgil, The Aeneid, Book 12

Question 5a.

As this passage appears towards the end of Book 12, students had a large selection of events to describe in Question 5a.

These included the following (though not all needed to be included):

* A treaty was made at the beginning of Book 12 dictating that Aeneas and Turnus should fight in a single combat. Whoever was the victor would become Lavinia’s husband and hold control of Latium, and the loser would need to leave.
* Amata promised that she would kill herself should Lavinia ever marry Aeneas.
* Juno ‘sanctioned’ the intervention of Juturna (Turnus’s sister and a nymph) to help Turnus. Juturna disguises himself as his charioteer Meticas and whisks Turnus away from the battle.
* With the treaty broken, the bloody battle continues between the Latins and the Trojans.
* Venus put it into Aeneas’s mind to attack and burn the city, an ignoble and cowardly action that Aeneas begins to do.
* Amata, on the walls of the city, sees the attack and the flames of the burning city and throws herself off the city walls and the city mourns for her.
* Turnus hears of this from Saces, a messenger, and it causes him great grief. He turns on his sister and reveals that he could always see through her disguise and that she must stop shaming him (dragging him from battle).

Higher-scoring responses were able to show how the events worked together to lead to the action described in the passage presented in this question. Some responses only referred to the events that occurred just prior to those described in the passage, from the burning of the city, which meant that they were not able to describe the sequence of events that led to this scene.

Question 5b.

In Question 5b., most students were able to identify the techniques and explain how Virgil used them to create this scene. Some responses, though, overlooked well-known epic techniques such as the simile, in favour of a generic explanation of language choices such as ‘violent’ or ‘harsh’ language.

Techniques that could have been discussed were (not all needed to be included for a high score):

* epic simile – Turnus compared to a boulder that has come loose and is careening down the mountain. In the simile, Turnus is the boulder and fate is the water and time
* burning motif – ‘burning eyes’, flames rolling and billowing
* the language of furore – ‘thunderstruck’, ‘stood there dumb’, ‘staring’, ‘seethed’
* imagery of the burning city – flames ‘rolling and billowing’, ‘the tongue of flame’. The flames and burning motif are a double allusion first to the burning of Troy – that is, the reason that Aeneas needs to find a new home – and then to the burning of Carthage
* personification – ‘the air sang with flying spears’ emphasises the speed and quantity of spears and the violence of the battle
* chaotic war imagery – ‘the shattered ranks of his enemy’
* direct speech
* repetition of ‘I am resolved’
* the description of the mixture of emotions in Turnus – ‘shame, grief, love, madness’ etc. – reflecting the conflicting feelings raging through him.

Some students wrote about the characterisation of Turnus as a technique in this passage. While this is correct, it was often a repetition of their answers for part c.

Question 5c.

In Question 5c., students wrote well about the extract, demonstrating their knowledge and understanding of the complexity of the character of Turnus through their discussion of the examples in the passage and the depth and specificity of the examples they drew on from outside the extract. However, some responses that compared Aeneas to Turnus to highlight a trait of Turnus ended up talking more about Aeneas. Students must ensure that their focus remains on the character named in the question.

Character traits that could have been explored included (though not all needed to be discussed):

* Turnus decides to fight Aeneas in single combat as a key turning point – Turnus is torn: he is ‘conscious of his own courage’ and yet is also seething in ‘bitter shame’; he is both the hero and the doomed hero.
* The tragedy of Turnus’s fate – he is heroic and yet this is not enough to save him.
* Throughout Book 12, Turnus is characterised as full of furore – he is ‘driven on by fury’; he begs, ‘let me be mad’ yet realises this at the end and accepts his fate as he says, ‘before I die.’
* Turnus is trapped by the heroic code with ‘consciousness of his own courage’.
* Turnus is connected to similes that reflect his furore and the futility of it, such as in the lion simile, in which the lion protects a doomed city (Carthage), ‘Like a bull … the bull is young and practicing’.

Students who did not refer to events outside the passage or only wrote a few sentences on outside events did not fully address the requirements of the question.

The following is an extract from a high-scoring response.

This passage is highly significant to Virgil’s characterisation of Turnus. Turnus is characterised as courageous, accepting that he will ‘die’ but more importantly that ‘god and cruel fortune demanded it of him’. Although having acknowledged that ‘Turnus is not free to hold back the day of his death’, earlier in the book Turnus’ actions have been against fate, acts of furor. Unlike Aeneas, Turnus entertained the broken treaty and ‘plunged’ into battle as the armies met after Juturna’s false portent. He is in this passage distinguished mom [sic] his earlier characterisation of ‘boy’ with ‘pallor’ across his skin, he is not a ‘frenzied bull’. Later in this passage Virgil characterises Turnus as aware of what ‘cruel fortune’ asks of him. Though in ‘deep dismay’ though his love was ‘driven on by fury’ he acknowledges that the ‘time of his death have come at last’. The characterisation of Turnus in this passage is the precursor to his characterisation at the end of the book. Although here he begs to be ‘mad’ Virgil cultivates a sense of futility. ‘Before he dies ’he wants the madness of furor to encompass him, to ‘burn’ until he – Turnus – is extinguished. At the end of the book as in this passage Turnus acknowledges Fortune and commands Aeneas to ‘make use of that fortune has given him, emphasising Turnus own cognisance that he has been acting against fortune. Turnus is therefore characterised by Virgil as a tragic hero doomed from the outset, yet bound by the heroic code and ‘resolved to suffer what bitterness there is in death’.

Suetonius, ‘Life of Nero’ in The Twelve Caesars

Question 6

No students answered this question.

Catullus, The Complete Poems

Question 7

No students answered this question.

Roman reliefs

Question 8a.

In Question 8a., most students demonstrated their knowledge of the works and could briefly explain their sociohistorical contexts. However, among the responses, there was an imbalance in the amount of detail given for the two images. Many students provided details for Image A but merely summarised Image B in one sentence, stating that it depicted Aeneas sacrificing to the gods.

Details that could be discussed were:

Image A (81 CE)

* Shows the late emperor Titus in a triumph in a panel of the Arch of Titus.
* In AD 69, Vespasian was waging war in Judea together with his sons, Titus and Domitian.
* When he became emperor, Vespasian left his son Titus behind to finish the war.
* After the death of Vespasian, Titus became emperor.
* Domitian commissioned the arch to the deified Titus and the triumph over the Jewish revolt/war in Jerusalem.

Image B (13–9 BCE)

* Shows Aeneas making a sacrifice in a panel from the Ara Pacis.
* The Ara Pacis was created to honour the victories of the emperor Augustus and the creation of a new era of peace (Pax Romana) after the tumult of the civil wars.
* The Res Gestae says it was built to celebrate the successful return from Gaul and Spain.
* The Julii clan claimed descent from Aeneas, so the monument connects Augustus to Aeneas.
* Aeneas is sacrificing a sow to the gods of Troy or the penates / household gods, whom Aeneas brought safely to Italy.
* The figure is Numa Pompilius.

Question 8b.

For Question 8b., some students discussed the techniques used in each relief but did not compare them as required by the question. Points of comparison included perspective, the use of symbols and real versus mythological events.

Higher-scoring responses selected a few key techniques, especially the symbolism in the two images, and compared how they are used in both rather than list all possible techniques.

Possible techniques could include (not all needed to be discussed to achieve a high score):

Image A

* Symbolism: the quadriga (four-horsed chariot) meaning triumph; laurel wreath, meaning victory, being held just above his head by Victoria (just above his head so he doesn’t believe himself more than mortal).
* Personification: winged Victory; Roma leading procession showing divine approval; Genius of the people and the Senate.
* The main figures are sculpted in high relief, and the emperor in particular stands out above all else (except for the goddess) in the scene.
* The finely carved horses give a sense of movement, with deep undercutting, while the soldiers can be inferred from the spears seen carved in low relief in the background.
* The sense of movement is important as the relief is a ‘freeze frame’ of an actual triumph; the movement allows the viewer to relive the glory of the triumph.
* The sense of perspective, the layering of horses through varying relief.
* The very low-relief spears in the background.
* The classicising style: anatomy, drapery, composition, idealised forms.

Image B

* Uses high relief, although not as much as Image A, and there is very little undercutting of the figures.
* Composition: elevated figure of Aeneas (like Augustus), figures looking up, background detail included. Idealised human form in Aeneas’s musculature, drapery as pontifex maximus.
* Allusion to foundation of Rome myth; sow signifies location of Rome.
* Mirroring of other panels: Augustus appears around the corner of the monument in the same dress, making the link clear.
* Sacrificial imagery.

Question 8c.

Question 8c. asked students to look at the values of Roman society as depicted in these two images and two other reliefs. Most students were able to connect the sculptures they know to Roman values and thus answered the question well. Higher-scoring responses included detailed reference to two additional pieces rather than just making passing references. Some students repeated points that they had already made in part b and thus did not fully address the requirements of this question.

Values that could be explained and analysed in the reliefs included (not all needed to be discussed to achieve a high score):

* pietas (to state, to gods and to family)
* religion – the central place of communal ritual to the Romans, and their belief that the favour of the gods must be obtained
* military triumph and patriotism – to bring all strata of society together in celebration of their common purpose of conquest and domination
* family – the connection of the emperors to the mythological family of Aeneas, and to the previous emperors.

The following is an extract from a high-scoring response.

The Aeneas sacrifice and the honorary monument to Marcus Aurelius; sacrifice to the Capitoline Jupiter both promulgate the significance of the Roman value pietas in society and in consolidating an emperor’s rule. The Aeneas sacrifice and the honorary monument both present the scene of sacrifices through the use of the costume of the pontifex maximus to assert their religious role and the inclusion of the parella which was poured on the ground after the sacrifice. This act of sacrifice paid respect to the gods and communicated the Roman ideal of pietas, duty to Rome, your gods and country. While the honorary monument specifically celebrates pietas through the deployment of a focal point and the iconography of the senate, the Aeneas sacrifice conversely alludes to Augustus’ piety.

Section B – Comparative study

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | Average |
| % | 0.8 | 0.4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 14 | 19 | 9 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 0.4 | 0 | 10.9 |

In most responses in Section B, students showed that they understood the works studied in terms of sociohistorical contexts, ideas and techniques. However, in the construction of their responses, some students did not fully address all of the key words included in the question, resulting in irrelevant discussions or no discussion of the techniques and sociohistorical context. Students should clearly outline in their introduction their contention in response to the question, which may involve defining terms.

In planning their essay, students must ensure that they are comparing the works studied in terms of ideas, techniques, genre and sociohistorical context. Many students did well in discussing each work but did not compare them. The questions were written in such a way as to encourage students to reflect on the validity of the statement they were presented with. There is no expectation for students to fully agree or disagree with the question. Higher-scoring responses often demonstrated understanding that there are aspects of the question that are true and others that can be disputed.

Students are reminded that each pair of works considered for the comparative essay includes works that are different in terms of genre and/or sociohistorical context and that they should use these differences to help frame their response. Often students seemed to have more detailed knowledge of one of the works than the other and as a result wrote an imbalanced essay.

Question 1 – Aristophanes, Lysistrata, and Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War

While most students were able to discuss and analyse the motivations of the Athenians in these two works, many did not define ‘simple desires’.

Ideas that students could have explored in their definition include:

* What is a desire and what is a simple one?
* If a desire is something you want, what did the Athenians want?
* Is a desire simple because it is easy to achieve or simple if it is an innate motivation for humans?
* What gets in the way of ‘simple desires’?

In the responses regarding Lysistrata, students tended to focus on how the sexual desire of the men was a simple one. This led to lengthy discussions of the sexual humour of the play. But most responses did not reflect on how peace was the real objective in comedy and why women had to go to extreme lengths to achieve it. Higher-scoring responses contextualised the play in terms of it being one of Aristophanes’s plays about peace, explaining that while peace was a ‘simple desire’ it was not easy to achieve due to the pursuit of empire, power and ambition. It is only in the farcical world of Lysistrata that peace is simple.

In the responses regarding History of the Peloponnesian War, students talked about how the Athenians’ desire was for power and empire. Yet few explained why these were simple desires. Students did better in their discussion of the Melians and their desire for neutrality as it is a natural desire of humans to want to be safe. Higher-scoring responses dealt with how both sides in this debate wanted peace but that one pursued it via power and one through neutrality. Many students, however, seemed to have pre-prepared an essay on war and adapted it to the question; and while some of the points they made were valid, their discussions did not fully address the requirements of the question.

Techniques, especially those used by Aristophanes, were referred to but not always connected to the question. Some responses stated that sexual innuendo is used but did not explore how it illustrates a ‘simple desire’. Likewise, Thucydides’s use of facts such as ship numbers was mentioned but not explained.

Some students referred to sections of History of the Peloponnesian War, such as the Sicilian expedition, that were not part the set sections. While this was an appropriate reference in discussing the sociohistorical context, a whole paragraph on this event was not needed.

The following is an extract from a high-scoring response.

While both authors use their respective works to expose the simple desires that motivated the Athenians, the objective nature of Thucydides’ History of the Peloponnesian war in addition to his service as an Athenian general and later exile permitted him a more nuanced perspective of the more complex motivations of the Athenians. Thucydides demonstrates this complexity in his reconstruction of Pericles’ funeral orations as Pericles argues that it is ‘our constitution and way of life that makes us great’. Thucydides inclusion of Pericles use of inclusive language to cause a sense of patriotism in his audience and his faith in democracy reveal that while Athenians were motivated by simple desires, their more complex patriotism and love for democracy also constituted their motivation. Furthermore, Thucydides experiences as a general permit him a deeper understanding of the complexities of leadership which motivated the Athenian. This can be seen in the Athenian dialogue in which the Athenians hold no personal grudge against the Melians, besides that they cannot be seen submitting to a weaker city for the continued stability of their empire. Unlike Thucydides, Aristophanes’ anti Peloponnesian war intention in writing Lysistrata prevents him from exploring any complex motivations in going to war. However Aristophanes does reveal the complex love and sense of justice felt by Athenians opposed to Aristophanes tragic tone as Lysistrata explains how women must ‘send their sons off to fight’, contrasts the humorous tones of the rest of the old comedy and reveal the love for their sons which motivated Athenian women. Similarly, Aristophanes inclusion of Lysistrata lambasting the war as cussing men to ‘ruin Greece’s towns and slay her men’ reveals a sense of deep and complex justice that motivated some Athenians such as Aristophanes to oppose the war.

Question 2 – Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound, and Plato, Apology

Question 2 required students to define and explain several terms. Many students simply accepted ‘misuse of knowledge’ and proceeded to list examples of and how such misuse led to consequences like punishment.

Higher-scoring responses discussed ideas such as:

* why people choose either intentionally or naively to misuse their knowledge, that is, for personal gain or in some cases to improve the lives of others
* what misuse means and who defines it
* how the antagonists in the works often perceived the protagonists as misusing their knowledge, whether they were or not.

Students discussed Zeus’s perception of Prometheus giving his knowledge to humans and his refusal to then share his knowledge of the future to Hermes. The jury in Apology, it could be argued, believed that Socrates was using his knowledge for the wrong purposes, whereas Socrates thought his role as the gadfly was for the good of the polis.

Students demonstrated that they knew these two works well and provided extensive discussion of scenes from Prometheus Bound or sections of the Apology. Some responses lacked effective comparison beyond saying that both Prometheus and Socrates were misjudged in how they used their knowledge. Students demonstrated a good understanding of the techniques that Aeschylus used in the play but tended to explore the techniques of Plato in less detail, which impacted their comparison.

Question 3 – Sophocles, Antigone, and Euripides, Electra

In Question 3, most students demonstrated their understanding of the meaning of ‘transgressive’. Yet many responses did not deal well with the absolute term ‘only’ in the question. As a result, while some students wrote well on the acts of revenge in the two tragedies, they did not explore what else could be considered transgressive. Responses that did focus only on revenge were able to make reasonable arguments about how it is or is not transgressive. Students needed to clearly explain why, for women, certain acts were transgressive because they defied the expectations of society, and when men’s actions also become transgressive in a patriarchal society.

Students tended to divide characters into those who are concerned with revenge and those who seek justice. While this division could be argued in Antigone with Antigone and Creon, it is a harder argument in relation to Electra. In the Euripides play, Clytaemnestra, who committed the act of revenge by murdering Agamemnon, is seen as a murderess in Electra’s eyes, yet in her own eyes she sees her actions as achieving justice. Most responses argued that Orestes was pursuing justice at the orders of the gods, but higher-scoring responses saw that his murder of Aegisthus, in the middle of a sacrifice, was more of a revenge act due to its brutality. They also looked at characters such as Ismene and the farmer to contrast them with those whose behaviours were transgressive.

In their comparisons, most responses focused only on the ideas. Students needed to look also at the difference in techniques, the intentions of the two playwrights and the sociohistorical context in which their plays were performed. Many students provided detailed descriptions of the festivals at which the plays were performed rather than the political concerns of the times. Some students said that Antigone was written during the golden age of Athens while Electra appeared during the years of the Peloponnesian war but did not explain what that meant in terms of connecting the ideas presented in the plays to the concerns of the time.

The following is an extract from a high-scoring response.

In both Antigone and Electra Sophocles and Euripides demonstrate that revenge is not the only act that is inherently transgressive. Through the actions of both Antigone and Orestes duty and loyalty are shown lead to the transgression of both social expectations and civil law. Moreover, in the behaviour of Creon and Electra it is pride that is shown to be inherently transgressive rather than revenge.

In both Electra and Antigone pride is illustrated as a source of transgression. Sophocles demonstrates this in the characterisation of Creon, who is portrayed as a principled leader is marred by his hamartia of pride. Although his initial actions are to make sure the ‘ship of the state’ remains safe, in which Sophocles metaphor serves to emphasise his deep respect and value of Thebes, his action of prohibiting the burial of Polynices transgresses the law of the gods by dishonouring the dead. This attempt to consolidate order and the consequences of division would have been familiar to the Athenians watching and hence Sophocles offers a warning against unbalanced authority. Moreover, Creon’s from this real model of leadership is promoted by pride not out of revenge… In Electra, Euripides depicts pride that prompts revenge and causes transgression as a result. This is expressed in the characterisation of Electra whose deeply materialistic gauge of self-wealth leads to transgressive acts. This is highlighted in how she asks the chorus ‘if my dirty hair and thin ragged clothes are befitting Agamemnon’s royal daughter?’, with Euripides utilising the contrasting imagery to reveal Electra vanity and source of agitation. This fallen social status is depicted as a type of death for Electra who is introduced to the audience in the predawn in which the sun is symbolic of death and hence a form of pathetic fallacy is illustrated. Due to Clytemnestra being viewed as the one responsible for this reduced status, Electra expresses how she ‘would gladly die if only I could slit my mother’s throat’, a gruesome image that starkly contrasts the submissive and docile nature expected of Greek women and illustrates her desire for revenge.

Question 4 – Cicero, ‘The First Philippic against Marcus Antonius’, and Plutarch, Mark Antony

No students answered this question.

Question 5 – Livy, The Rise of Rome, and Tacitus, The Annals of Imperial Rome

Students who chose Question 5 tended to write well, clearly explaining and supporting their claims. Most students dealt with the absolute term ‘no one’, discussing those who were virtuous and those who were not. From Livy, the examples of Verginia as a truly virtuous woman were usually contrasted with Livia in Tacitus, or Appius Claudius (Livy) was contrasted with Germanicus (Tacitus). Some responses dealt with the idea of being ‘truly virtuous’ by discussing those figures who could be perceived as virtuous and those who could not. Camillus, for example, had admirable qualities, evidenced by his military victories, yet he was dogged by accusations of corruption and embezzlement. Some of the higher-scoring responses talked about the Roman people themselves as ‘truly virtuous as they are shown to rid themselves of those who weren’t virtuous’. While students were able to discuss the ideas of the question, many did not provide enough comparison of techniques.

In the comparison of the sociohistorical context of the two works, many students focused on who was in power, and on the relationship of the writer to the emperors. Higher-scoring responses focused on the purpose of the works and the ideals in Roman society related to virtue. A few responses explored the role of the Mos Maiorum (The Ways of the Ancestors), the unwritten code of conduct and the Roman values of ‘virtus, pietas, dignitas, pudicitia’, and how the virtuous are recognised for their deeds, are rewarded and get everlasting fame.

The following is an extract from a high-scoring response.

Virtuous individuals, those who line [sic] by and act in accordance with the Mos Mairom and benefit Rome do however exist in the Rome depicted by Livy and Tacitus. Cincinnatus the dictator who gave up his position ‘within 16 days’ is a ‘good example’ whom Livy would like to encourage his audience to emulate. Leading Rome to victory and rescuing a consul and his army form the enemy, Cincinnatus embodies a virtuous military leader not lacking in pietas and additional living by the Roman value of simplicitas on his ‘3-acre farm’. Bemoaning an age in which greed and excess abound, Livy would no doubt have seen Cincinnatus as a prime example for his readership… Tacitus similarly depicts a figure in who, virtue (pietas, virtue and benevolence) is not lacking. Germanicus grandnephew to Augustus is characterised by Tacitus as a ‘kind-hearted’ man whom ‘solved every eastern question of the Roman Empire’. In addition, his large family further demonstrates his pietas. Furthermore, he is characterised as benevolent when he saves his enemy Piso from a storm. Germanicus’ pietas is even further enhanced by the way Tacitus describes him ‘visiting historical sites’ enthusiastically. Germanicus’ love for Rome proves his inner virtue and his military success proves his ‘true’ virtue. The ability of this virtue to benefit Rome. Unlike Livy who seeks to teach examples for Romans to emulate and avoid, Tacitus seeks to critique the imperial system in which he lives …

Question 6 – Petronius, Dinner with Trimalchio, and Juvenal, Satires

Students who answered Question 6 argued that both works discussed excess and their responses provided extensive evidence to support this idea. However, the inclusion of the word ‘only’ in the question required students to look beyond excess to consider the other concerns of the writer. The higher-scoring responses found differences in the tone, purpose and outlook of Petronius and Juvenal, illustrating how they both utilise excess in their works for different purposes.

Juvenal is concerned with excess, but he primarily sees it as a vehicle to explore the loss of traditional Roman values. To him, excess is a symbol of what is wrong with Roman society. Petronius is also concerned about excess, but some students argued that for him the excess in itself is a cause for concern and also humour. These responses thus argued that Petronius’s message has less gravitas than Juvenal’s. Some students focused on the depiction of women in particular rather than the whole of society, and as a result they did not fully address the requirements of the question.

When discussing techniques, some students defined terms and techniques like satire rather than discussing how these techniques were used by the authors to convey their idea of their society.

Question 7 – The Parthenon and the Colosseum

Students demonstrated their understanding of this question and knowledge of the priorities and values that these two monuments encapsulate. However, most responses talked about these monuments in broad terms: the Parthenon as reflecting the importance of democracy, and the Colosseum as representative of the power and brutality of the Roman Empire. Students should be aware that just as when they are dealing with written works they need to support their arguments with analysis of specific examples, the same applies to the material works, for which students need to focus on specific details to support their arguments rather than the ‘big picture’.

Students who discussed how the frieze of the Parthenon depicts the people of Athens themselves, how the iconography of the metopes reflects the distinction between civilisation and barbarism, or how the entasis of the building reflects arete demonstrated far more understanding of the temple. Likewise, references to the seating reflecting the social hierarchy or to the placement of the Colosseum on the ruins of Nero’s palace produced better discussions of the Colosseum than responses describing how it was flooded or how animals were used in events held there. Higher-scoring responses demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the monuments through the selection of examples used to support their arguments.

Many students did not compare the two monuments, except for saying that they reflected their respective societal values. Higher-scoring responses looked at how both were symbols of the empires the two cultures had built. They discussed how the Parthenon stands as a testament to Athenian democracy, intellectual pursuits and cultural achievements, while the Colosseum embodies the grandiosity, martial spirit and entertainment culture of the Roman Empire. Higher-scoring responses also referred to the differences such as how the Parthenon is ornate and its messaging is conveyed through symbolism, whereas the Colosseum’s messaging is communicated through stagecraft and technology.

Question 8 – Virgil, The Aeneid, Book 4, and Euripides, Medea

Students who chose Question 8 demonstrated a very good understanding of both works and their context. Most responses defined human weakness, usually as passion and pride, and were able to construct a clear argument about the pain and sorrow it caused. Few responses dealt with the idea of ‘for all’. Some high-scoring responses referred to the Nurse and Chorus in Medea and the people of Carthage in the Aeneid as people who suffered due to the weakness of others. Some responses interpreted the question as ‘who is to blame for the suffering of others?’, focusing more on what Medea and Jason, and Dido and Aeneas did rather than what led them to do those actions. While some of the points were valid, when students focused on the differences between males and females in the works, they did not fully address the requirements of the question.

The techniques used in both works were explained well across the responses, with discussion of imagery especially used to support the idea of pride and passion as weaknesses. Higher-scoring responses compared the different key techniques of the genres, such as the stichomythia in tragedy versus the multiple narrative perspective in the epic.

Responses demonstrated that students’ knowledge of the writers and their times and how that influenced their purpose was good though often unbalanced, with the political purpose of The Aeneid being dealt with in more detail. References to the start of the Peloponnesian war were not clearly connected to the play, though references to xenophobia / the other and Pericles’s citizenship laws were relevant.