



General Certificate of Education

Classical Civilisation

CIV1C Aristophanes and Athens

Report on the Examination

January examination - 2009 series

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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CIV1C Aristophanes and Athens

Throughout the paper there was abundant evidence that the few candidates entered for this option had very much enjoyed their study of Aristophanes and thereby gained some useful insights into Athenian politics and society. Unfortunately, the enthusiasm was not always backed up with sufficient detailed knowledge or tight argument.

Question 1

Most candidates knew about Dikaiopolis' disguise as a beggar in part (a)(i) and had some awareness of his parody of the origins of the Archidamian War in part (ii). In part (b), virtually all candidates were able to identify two or three jokes in the passage and make some attempt to explain them. However, fewer candidates extended the number of examples to include enough different techniques to support a convincing judgement on the variety in the passage. Answers to part (c) generally showed recall of the broad outline of the plot, but they often failed to carry conviction through a lack of detail and/or attention to the precise evaluative focus.

Question 2

All parts of part (a) were usually very well known. By contrast, part (b) divided candidates quite markedly: some demonstrated a good knowledge of the military and political background, while others appeared to be quite confused (for example, between Sphacteria and Amphipolis). However, answers to part (c) – which was about the play itself again – were usually more informed and perceptive in comparison with those to Question 1(c), even when the sacrifice scene was omitted. The impression was given that the details of *Peace* and the issues it raises were better remembered than those of *The Acharnians*.

Question 3

The best answers did not simply explain the humorous words and antics of the slaves in each play, but from the outset established an over-arching framework within which an assessment of their relative importance could be made. Slaves in *The Acharnians* and *Peace* were then usually seen to be peripheral to the main concerns and targets of the plays, however comic individual sketches might be, whereas the slaves in *The Knights* were central to its comic effect and overall meaning. However, answers which lacked a clear theme were often little more than a list of comic incidents.

Question 4

Most candidates made some attempt to adopt an evaluative approach, but some focused just on political leadership without considering Aristophanes' treatment of different social classes. In some cases, the knowledge was sound as far as it went, but candidates had not left themselves sufficient time to conclude their argument with an overall judgement which responded to the terms of the question.