



**General Certificate of Education  
June 2012**

**Classical Civilisation 2020**

**CIV1C: Aristophanes and Athens**

***Report on the Examination***

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## CIV1C Aristophanes and Athens

### Section One

#### Option A

Although in Question 01 there was frequently a discrepancy about the age at which Athenians could become citizens, this did not generally matter in this case as long as students adequately conveyed a distinction between Athenian citizens and other inhabitants of Athens. At least part of the knowledge required for Question 03 was also mainly well recalled. Question 02, however, caused students more difficulties: some, who knew what the Executive were, nevertheless confused their role in Athenian politics, while others identified the Executive with the whole Assembly (*ekklesia*).

Virtually all answers to Question 04 attempted an evaluative approach, and the best efficiently supported astute and perceptive judgements with well-chosen details from the passage.

In Question 05, good answers took their lead from the ‘problems’ suggested in the bullet points and presented coherent arguments that addressed most of these issues with detailed support from across the **whole** play. By contrast, weaker answers either did not focus sharply enough on the problems mentioned in the passage and so wrote too generally or, if they did attempt to focus, limited the response to a very narrow range of detail from the play, for example discussing little more than Lamachus.

#### Option B

This option received more answers than Option A; the standard of work throughout was very similar. Questions 06 and 08 were generally answered accurately, but in Question 07 a substantial minority did not know what obols were. In Question 09, most students were able to show some awareness of Cleon’s activities at Pylos, but a few interpreted the imagery literally and wrote about the Paphlagonian’s culinary expertise.

In Question 10, students who understood that Thepeople represents ‘Athenian citizens as a whole’ were able to respond to both parts of the question with pertinent and developed points supported with details from across the whole passage. Weaker answers were limited just to discussion of Aristophanes’ presentation of the individual politician Cleon. Some students foolishly ignored the passage altogether and just mentioned anything from the opening scene with Nicias and Demosthenes.

The best answers to Question 11 considered both of its constituent parts, though not necessarily with equal balance. It was, therefore, disappointing how many students concentrated just on the humiliation of the Paphlagonian and totally ignored the reformation of Thepeople or made only brief, perfunctory comments about it. Some students simply described the episodes listed in the bullet points without constructing around them an evaluative argument that focused on judgements in response to the question.

### Section Two

#### Option C

Question 12 was by far the more popular of the two options, perhaps unsurprisingly, since it focused on the two plays which students tend to perceive as being easier and it did not necessarily entail any discussion of the chorus. All students referred to both *The Acharnians* and *Peace*, but many did not address all three areas specified in the question, namely food,

drink and sex. The most perceptive arguments focused sharply on the key word 'obsession', while weaker answers merely listed occasions when reference to some of these pleasures aroused a laugh. Students who supplied a prepared essay on the types of humour to be found in the plays of Aristophanes, with barely a passing mention of food, drink or sex, fared particularly badly.

### **Option D**

The best answers to Question 13 sustained a sharp evaluative focus on both parts of the question and demonstrated a wide range of well-chosen detailed knowledge from all three plays. Because of this, there was a larger percentage of high marks than in Question 12. Others tended simply to describe the role the choruses had in the plots of the plays, but did not attempt to assess how far they contributed to the comic effect. Perhaps these students genuinely did not regard the choruses as being funny but, if so, the case needed to be explicitly argued, not merely implied.

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