



**General Certificate of Education
June 2012**

Classical Civilisation 2020

CIV3A: Mycenaean Civilisation

Report on the Examination

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CIV3A Mycenaean Civilisation

General Comments

The examiners were pleased, once again, to see a substantial number of students for this unit. The standard of the best work was high and there were some excellent answers. Many students had well-developed analytical skills which they demonstrated in their answers to the 10 and 20-mark questions. Most students demonstrated sensible strategies on time-management, and few students spent too much time on the 20-mark essay at the expense of the 40-mark synoptic question. There was evidence of familiarity with sites and some of their archaeological finds and trends in its interpretation, and of some excellent and committed teaching. Once again, however, examiners noted some students with extremely poor writing and spelling skills. A few less sophisticated students resort to descriptive rather than analytical answers.

Section One

Option A

Option A was much the more popular of the structured questions, reflecting engagement with the sizeable body of knowledge and speculation on Mycenae, Tiryns and Pylos, on palace cultures and on the evidence provided by their physical remains. Most answers to Question 01 could identify the Lion Gate, the north sally-port, the steps to the protected cistern, the megaron of the palace, and Grave Circle A. Answers to Question 02 then enlarged on their probable significance as evidence for a site with a focus on the defence of a culture centred on a palace, a cult centre, and a protected elite burial site and its contents, with provision for siege conditions. Answers to Question 03 then extended this evidence into comparison with Tiryns and Pylos and what they suggest about their inhabitants' priorities, and what they show us about their relative administrative structures, technical advancement and religious commitment.

Option B

Option B attracted a small number of answers. The question was seeking evidence of an understanding of the use of pottery, the most prolific surviving artefact on any Mediterranean site, as evidence. Some answers could respond to Question 04 by identifying the use of ceramic evidence to establish chronology: shapes and style evolve over time and this is usually viewed as a serial process with earlier and later characteristics. An accepted typological chronology, often established by association with other types of find, will provide clues about the settlement, construction and development of the site over time, incomers, trade, and the background economy. None of the answers to Question 05 fully exploited the features visible in the photograph to interpret the pots in terms of use: the stirrup jar A is a fluid dispensation bottle, filled via its mouth, which may imply that the fluid was relatively thin, perhaps wine or milk; the larger vessel B is designed to be filled via its neck, with a narrow spout implying the pouring of oil; the jar at the front C may have had a lid and is probably a container for small solids or possibly honey and the 'basket' D either small food offerings or child-related items, as these are miniatures of a type which is often a grave offering for a child. Some answers to Question 06 were able to suggest that pottery may be used by archaeologists as dating evidence for a site, a clue to the construction date of part of it, evidence for identification of the purpose of the site, evidence of serial use of the same site, a way of identifying the users, evidence of trade and overseas contact and evidence for a local economy. There was some

good discussion of the illustrative evidence provided by figured ceramics, especially the Warrior Vase, but little citation of any other sites and their finds.

Section Two

Option C

The majority of students chose to answer Question 7, and most provided discussion of the pluses and minuses of the tablets as evidence, informed by a sense of the questions they raise about the status of the information they contain. Most students raised clear queries, supported by a detailed knowledge of their content, about the nature of the lists they contain, the bureaucracy they supported, their palatial focus and the consequent view we take of the palaces, and the identifiable gaps in our understanding of Mycenaean civilisation which they do or do not fill.

Option D

There were a few good answers to this question, which demonstrated knowledge of the Shaft Graves and their finds and could show that they allow us to evaluate the status of Mycenaean art objects in their own right and their value as dating criteria, as developmental series with implications for our knowledge of travelling and local skills, and our information on their materials (especially gold), together with evidence for further reflection on trade and other contacts. The Shaft Graves and their contents have implications for our understanding of the élite buried in them and their social status and reception, also reflected in the finds. Poorer answers tended to classify all burial sites as Shaft Graves, and to provide a comprehensive survey of the student's knowledge of Mycenaean Art, including the frescoes found elsewhere.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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