



**General Certificate of Education
June 2012**

Classical Civilisation 2020

CIV4C: Roman Epic

Report on the Examination

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CIV4C Roman Epic

General Comments on the Examination

Virtually all students showed some engagement with the topics studied, many writing with clearly articulated interest and enthusiasm. Inevitably some topics are more popular than others, an overwhelming majority opting for Roman Epic. Nonetheless all of the less popular topics have a reasonably wide take-up, proving that Claudius and Tiberius, Alexander and Socrates are worth studying at this level.

Most students showed some degree of competence at analysing prescribed sources and varying levels of competence in making judgements based on this. Weaker students tended to be more descriptive in their responses to questions carrying 10 marks, whilst the more accomplished evaluated freely. Thematic essays carrying 20 marks varied from being over-descriptive or unstructured to tightly argued and well balanced. There was also a wide range of quality in synoptic essays worth 40 marks, with the best using contextual frameworks to good effect. It is important to realise that synoptic knowledge and understanding are not optional additions to be stated without much reference to the rest of the content of the essay but integral to the whole.

Knowledge of key names and points in the plot was sound, judging by the responses to the short questions for Option A and the less popular Option B. A very high proportion of students scored the full 5 marks for Questions 01, 02, and 03 or for 06, 07, 08 and 09. One must stress, however, that these were all very straightforward questions apart perhaps from Question 09.

Most students made some attempt, however limited, to take an evaluative approach to the analysis of a passage from the *Aeneid*, although at the lower levels too many tended to describe elements of the passage, for example Rumour's movements in Question 04, or make unsupported assertions, for example that the imagery applied to Allecto was 'dark' without providing a precise example, not even the description of her 'dark hair' (line 5). Many students, nonetheless, seized the opportunities provided by the passages to show Virgil's effective portrayals of the goddesses' power through such devices as the personification of Rumour in Question 04 or the use of the metaphors of necklace and ribbon to denote the undulations of the serpent thrown round Amata's neck by Allecto in Question 10. The best answers were evaluative throughout and amply illustrated from whichever passage was chosen.

Weaker responses to the 20-mark essay questions were characterised by excessive narration of supernatural events, for example the fire on Iulus' head in Book 2, and divine interventions such as Juno's attempts to thwart Aeneas (Question 05) or by straight summaries of the parts played by Amata and her family (Question 11). More successful were those who either evaluated either in a final paragraph or point by point, even if in some cases any evaluations were cursory. Best of all were those who created a strong evaluative framework from the outset, showing importance to such things as plot, theme and characterisation.

The synoptic questions, Option C, which was by far the more popular, and Option D, attracted a wide range of responses in terms both of quality and approach. In response to Question 12 some were side-tracked into overlong discussions of Homeric heroes without much by way of linkage to the Roman context. Some also had problems with the term 'flawed'. Many well-argued essays were, nonetheless, produced, with Aeneas' displays of *furor* generally seen as making Aeneas a 'flawed hero' as opposed to his conventionally heroic behaviours in which *pietas* figured prominently. Most students proved capable of discussing the instruction element in Question 13 but a minority, equating instruction with propaganda, produced limited work.

Virtually all students found it difficult to deal with the entertainment aspect, better attempts dwelling on the powerful storytelling of Aeneas' visit to the Underworld in Book 6, the fall of Troy in Book 2 or the battle scenes towards the end of the epic.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

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