



General Certificate of Education

Classical Civilisation

CIV1B Athenian Democracy

Report on the Examination

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CIV1B Athenian Democracy

Section One

Option A, based on an extract from Solon's poetry, received considerably more responses than Option B, on a passage about the developed democracy from the 'Old Oligarch'.

Option A

Answers to Question 01 were generally sound, apart from the surprisingly common false assertion that Solon was not an aristocrat. However, some candidates substituted information about his later actions in place of the required details about his reputation before taking up office. In Question 02 most candidates had a general understanding of the conditions that led to the enslavement of citizens, but because of imprecision they did not consistently score the second mark available.

Most candidates attempted evaluative answers to Question 03, which were often particularly strong on the humiliating effects of the *horoi*. However, there was frequent error or imprecision: for example, Solon did not abolish slavery altogether, freed slaves and debt-free *hektemoroi* were not left landless, and *thetes* did not at this date row in the navy. Tending to focus just on the economic consequences of the *seisachtheia*, candidates did not sufficiently stress how emancipation made participation in politics and the legal process possible.

Many candidates wrote commendably long answers to Question 04, but they did not always pay enough attention to the precise focus of the question and provided disappointingly inadequate accurate discussion of two central issues, the right of appeal and third-party redress.

Option B

In Questions 05 and 06 most candidates were able to demonstrate some relevant knowledge but, as was often also the case in Questions 01 and 02, without the number of details necessary to score full marks. This was somewhat surprising in view of the range of possibilities for candidates to draw on and, in Question 06, the centrality of the Assembly to Athenian democracy.

In Question 07 candidates generally had a good sense of the principles, and in particular they usually understood the probable importance of selection by lot for the decline in archons' power relative to that of *stratego*i during the 5th century. Marks, therefore, were generally higher than in Question 03, although answers tended to focus exclusively on magistracies rather than widening the scope to include the *Boule* and *dikasteria*.

Answers to Question 08 were also generally more successful than those to Question 04. Despite some weaknesses in recalling appropriate details, there was generally good understanding of the circumstances in which Ephialtes carried through his reforms during the absence of Cimon, and of the important part the fleet played in Athens' escalating conflict with Sparta.

Section Two

Option C, on the effects of the tyranny and Cleisthenes' reforms, was overwhelmingly more popular than Option D, on Aristophanes' *Wasps*, which confirmed the impression that candidates were generally better prepared on the process in the 6th century by which Athens

came to her democracy rather than on the working of the system in the second half of the 5th century and attitudes towards it.

Option C

Most candidates demonstrated some sound knowledge of both the tyranny and Cleisthenes' reforms and a broad understanding of the period, but they did not always focus sharply on the precise issue for evaluation on this occasion. Thus, some wrote irrelevantly about Peisistratus' rise to power, while others did not distinguish clearly enough between unity and equality and/or did not explain in sufficient detail exactly how Cleisthenes' tribal reform and his *Boule* helped to unify Attica. Some quite promising arguments were weakened by factual errors, such as confusion between demes, trittyes and tribes, or the mistaken belief that the prytany, rather than being the steering committee it was, acted on behalf of the *Boule* for its term of office, with the *Boule* never apparently meeting as a whole.

Option D

The far smaller number of candidates who attempted Option D generally had a good knowledge of *Wasps* and a sound understanding of the implications of the question. Although many candidates chose to conclude that Aristophanes was writing only to entertain, they seldom made much attempt to discuss the social satire in the second part of the play and sometimes exaggerated Cleon's powers and the dangers of writing political comedy. The candidates who were more convinced of Aristophanes' serious purposes also tended to be prone to hyperbole, sometimes misinterpreting the political views voiced in the play and regarding Aristophanes as an oligarch seeking nothing less than the destruction of democracy. However, much of the work was informed and perceptive, reflecting a strong engagement with Aristophanes' comic techniques and the political context.