



**General Certificate of Education**

**Classical Civilisation**

**CIV1D Women in Athens and Rome**

**Report on the Examination**

*June examination - 2009 series*

**This Report on the Examination uses the [new numbering system](#)**

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

## **CIV1D Women in Athens and Rome**

### **Section One**

Option B, on Roman women, was a rather more popular choice than Option A, on Athenian women.

#### **Option A**

Question 02 was generally better answered than Question 01, but in both there was a tendency towards vagueness and irrelevance. Question 03 was well done by the candidates who noted that it was asking about the evidence supplied by Phano's first husband Phrastor, but unfortunately many candidates missed this and wrote irrelevantly about Neaera's early life in Corinth and/or with Phrynion in Athens.

Despite some confusion about the actual power of the phratry to recognise or withhold citizenship, answers to Question 04 generally made a sound attempt to assess the role of the phratry in the period and its impact on women's lives, with support from some relevant details given in the prescribed speeches.

In Question 05 many candidates used their detailed knowledge of the play to assess the importance of religious parody among the various sources of humour on which Aristophanes draws. In particular, there was some good understanding of the way Aristophanes exploits male insecurities in his ludicrously implausible portrayal of the Thesmophoria. Less able candidates, however, often failed to identify the particular sections of the play which form a parody of the festival and/or to recognise the comic absurdity, accepting things at face value and believing, for example, that Euripides' alleged 'attacks' on women had actually led to greater restrictions on their behaviour. A surprising number of candidates confused Euripides with Aristophanes.

#### **Option B**

In Question 06 most candidates knew some of Livy's story about the Sabine women, but a disappointing number were unable to provide the four details necessary to achieve full marks. Precision was also often lacking in answers to Question 07.

Candidates' performance in Question 08 was very similar to that in Question 04. The best answers supported argument with detailed knowledge of the various qualities for which Cornelia was normally held in high esteem, and sometimes included some pertinent insights on the nature of Juvenal's satire and his purpose in writing. Weaker answers tended merely to paraphrase the passage, including little (if any) specific knowledge about Cornelia, as if the question were about attitudes to Roman women in general.

Answers to Question 09 generally showed some improvement over those to Question 05. Knowledge of the women in Pliny's letters was generally sound and evaluation was mainly directed at the quotation given from Juvenal. Some of the most perceptive candidates made a useful distinction between the women who were praised mainly for conventional domestic attributes and those who, as Stoic dissidents, demonstrated their loyalty to family against the emperor with qualities that were traditionally more associated with men.

## Section Two

There was a fairly even split between Option C, on Athenian wives, and Option D, on women in Republican Rome, although this time the Athenian question was slightly more popular than the Roman one.

### Option C

This question produced a pleasing number of competent essays, and some excellent ones. Most candidates were well informed about women's domestic roles and understood the importance of legitimacy, even if knowledge of the consequences of adultery and illegitimacy was sometimes rather sketchy. Candidates who wrote general accounts of the life of an Athenian wife without detailed support from the prescribed sources and/or a sharp focus on the terms of the question scored less highly.

### Option D

Option D elicited slightly more good answers than Option C. That women could act independently in the interests of Rome or their family in extreme situations when no suitable man was on hand was well understood and often effectively argued. The best candidates, too, successfully integrated some insights on the nature of the sources into their discussion. Candidates mainly had at least an adequate knowledge of the positive legendary and historical *exempla* but, although they were familiar with the general contexts in which Sempronia and Clodia received their negative portrayals, they often found it more difficult to use these cases effectively in the argument.