



**General Certificate of Education**

**Classical Civilisation**

**CIV2A *Homer Iliad***

**Report on the Examination**

*June examination - 2009 series*

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

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## **CIV2A Homer *Iliad***

Many candidates had clearly enjoyed their study of the text and wrote with understanding and empathy. Overall there were gratifyingly few very poor answers and no individual questions which led to widespread difficulties. On the short introductory questions candidates were more secure with the facts linked to the Option A passage. For the 10-mark answers, it was particularly pleasing to see the close attention paid by many candidates to the set passages, although the character of Paris in Question 03 elicited significantly better answers. The best answers on the 20- and 30-mark questions avoided a narrative approach, addressed the title directly and evaluated throughout; more generalised answers invariably scored lower marks. A number of candidates tended to judge Homeric behaviour in accordance with modern values; this again tended to produce weaker answers. Question 04 on Hector was generally better answered than the equivalent question on Patroclus, while the question on women (Question 11) produced a slightly higher mean mark than Question 10 on Achilles' changes of mood.

### **Option A**

Most candidates answered Questions 01 and 02 confidently and correctly; 'immediately' in 02 was taken to include any of the women recently met in Troy. There were many full and evaluative answers to Question 03, candidates often identifying a range of qualities relating to Paris from the extended horse simile. His laughter was seen by some as showing inappropriate light-heartedness; other candidates saw this lack of fear as a strength. Credit was given either way. Some high scoring answers went on to compare Homer's portrayal of Paris with his portrayal of Hector in the passage. The best responses to Question 04 kept both 'admiration' and 'sympathy' in mind throughout, often weaving the two together to good effect. Credit was given to candidates who drew out the relevance of imperfections in Hector's character to both aspects of the title, as well as assessing his strengths. As always, unsupported generalisations gained less credit than references to specific incidents.

### **Option B**

Questions 05, 06 and 07 presented little difficulty to most candidates who were familiar with this key incident in the story. A few answers were somewhat vague as to which deities protected Hector's body and how. In answering 01 a minority of candidates seemed to be referring to detail from the film *Troy*, which differs substantially from Homer's account. Most candidates wrote pleasingly on the emotions revealed in the passage in response to Question 08, again providing evidence directly from the passage to support their analyses. The best answers brought out the subtle changes in emotion as the passage proceeds, in particular from the 'ritual nature' of the earlier sections, through grief and on to the 'unbridled savagery' of the later part. There was a mixed performance on Question 09. Many good answers disagreed, often vehemently, with the assertion that Patroclus was 'not very important', often pointing out the catalytic nature of his contribution, while several sensibly suggested that he was 'more important dead than alive'. Rather too many candidates failed to back sensible arguments with sufficient detail from the text; Book 11 was often ignored, while again the rather different portrayal of Patroclus' death in the film *Troy* led to some basic misinterpretations of Book 16.

### **Option C**

The quality of answers here covered the whole range from poor to excellent. The former tended to suffer by restricting their responses to a largely narrative account of Achilles' actions, while fitting in a quick reference to moods in the final paragraph; the relatively few excellent scripts discussed in some detail the more subtle changes of mood such as the interplay between grief and anger in both Books 1 and 18, or the relevance of the mellowing during the embassy of Book 9 and the importance of Achilles' somewhat confused state of mind in Book 11.

There was a large number of middle range answers which focused on the 'pivotal' nature of Books 1, 16, 18 and 24. It was pleasing to see well-argued points on Achilles' mood as depicted in the funeral games of Book 23, but disappointing that a surprising number of candidates did not refer at all to the events of Book 24. Once again, the scripts that scored the highest marks avoided unsupported generalisation, but rather employed a range of relevant detail to support each change of mood (or lack of, equally important in places as many of the best answers argued).

### **Option D**

This question produced a gratifying number of high-scoring responses, with almost half the answers reaching at least Level 4. Few candidates failed to mention both similarities and differences between mortal and immortal women; many produced compelling arguments with a wide range of specific detail. The similarities of the two groups within the family situation were often well illustrated, then used to contrast with the great differences of influence between the groups in the world beyond the family. There were some interesting discussions on the differences between Helen and the other mortal women; a number of particularly good responses pointed out that she and Briseis were, in a sense, more responsible for what happens than any goddess or god, but then used the unwitting nature of their contribution to balance the argument. Candidates discussing the relationship between Andromache and Hector sometimes looked at it from too modern a viewpoint, resulting in the masking of some important issues which more able candidates used to great advantage.