



General Certificate of Education

Classical Civilisation

CIV1B Athenian Democracy

Report on the Examination

January examination - 2010 series

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CIV1B Athenian Democracy

Most candidates made a sensible attempt to engage with the issues raised by the questions and generally showed some good insights into Athenian democracy. The best answers were outstanding for their command of relevant detail, perceptiveness of analysis and structure of argument. Most candidates adopted an evaluative approach with some attempt to organise an argument that led to a formally stated conclusion. The main shortcomings in the middle range of answers were the failures to provide sufficient reference to detail to back up opinions and clear links between paragraphs to join the argument into a coherent whole.

The majority of candidates used their time sensibly in proportion to the marks available for each question. Some, however, wrote at excessive length for the early questions and consequently left one of the essays incomplete. It was evident that candidates who planned could ensure they covered the full range of points and reached a conclusion, even if they were under pressure of time.

A number of centres failed to use the new AQA answer books. As well as enabling AQA to process and mark scripts quickly and accurately, these new answer books allow teachers to access detailed information about their candidates' performance, including a breakdown of their marks, through the Enhanced Results Analysis service.

Question 1

This historical question was approximately three times more popular than Question 2 on Aristophanes' *Wasps*. However, although the overall performance on Question 130 was better than that on Question 230, the general standard of answers to Questions 111, 112 and 120 was lower than that to Questions 211, 212 and 220.

In Questions 111 and 112 frequent reference was made to Hippias' cruelty after Hipparchus' murder, but recall of further details was problematic for many candidates. In Question 120 most attempted to put forward an argument; what distinguished between candidates was not so much differences of opinion as the ability to support the argument with precise details from Aristotle's account of what is a crucial moment for the subsequent development of Athenian democracy, and critical in assessing Cleisthenes' aims and motivation.

The claim of the quotation in Question 130 seemed to take many candidates by surprise, but most made some attempt to link their prepared account of Cleisthenes' reforms to this issue, though often by verbal repetition rather than by close argument. It was no accident that demes headed the list of bullet points; they were the foundation of Cleisthenes' system and needed much more discussion than most candidates gave. But for all the topics listed in the bullet points, what was important was not just to describe – and in many cases this description could have been more precise, particularly with regard to the formation of the tribes – but to **explain** precisely how and how far the new arrangements were intended to reduce, or actually reduced, noble rivalries.

Question 2

The vast majority of candidates gained a mark for Question 211; 'servants' was accepted, although in this topic at this level candidates should have a basic grasp of the nature of slavery in Athenian society. Question 212 was generally answered well by candidates who restricted their answer to Xanthias' speech rather than summarising later incidents in the play. There

were many good appreciations of the passage in response to Question 220, with some understanding of the way a comic duo works. Candidates who consistently made points and then explained each with detail from the passage achieved a higher level than those who either left their comments unsupported or merely paraphrased the extract. Despite some shrewd responses, essays in answer to Question 230 tended to be less successful, mainly for the following reasons:

- insufficient reference to details from the play in order to justify the comments being made, particularly but not exclusively with regard to the later part
- uncritical and unsupported assumptions about Aristophanes' personal political agenda
- a tendency to deliver a general essay on *Wasps* which was not focused on the precise issue raised by the question
- a lack of clarity in analysing and differentiating between Aristophanes' mockery of Athenian democratic institutions, ridicule of the Athenian *demos* and satire on prominent individuals.

Question 3

Question 300 was far more popular than Question 400 (by a factor of 5), and answers frequently demonstrated better knowledge and understanding of Solon and a sharper focus on the question than in the 2009 examinations. This was very encouraging, except that there remained a tendency to vagueness, or complete omission, of his judicial reforms, which were highly relevant in this context as they seem to have been effective and largely uncontested solutions to some of the problems referred to in the question.

Question 4

A higher percentage of candidates reached Level 5 in Question 400 than in Question 300, but below that the performance was less good. This was largely because of insufficient accurate knowledge, and a tendency to describe bullet point by bullet point rather than to shape an argument in which the information was used to explain and justify opinion. It was disappointing that, even with the inclusion of *Wasps* in the new specification, candidates had more confidence in answering questions on the historical background to the Athenian democracy than on the way it functioned and was viewed once it was established.