



**General Certificate of Education**

**Classical Civilisation**

**CIV1D Women in Athens and Rome**

**Report on the Examination**

*January examination - 2010 series*

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## CIV1D Women in Athens and Rome

Most candidates made a sensible attempt to engage with the issues raised by the questions and generally showed some good insights into the status of women in the classical world. 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

More than twice as many candidates attempted Question 1 as Question 2, showing how successfully *Women at the Thesmophoria* has been integrated into the topic. Almost all candidates knew the answer to Question 112, but there was more confusion over the exact contributions of Agathon and Euripides to the disguise in Questions 113 and 114. Agathon's reason for declining in Question 111 was known by less than half the candidates.

Question 120 elicited many reasoned and informed arguments that addressed both issues and took account of the reasons why fertility was so important for both the *oikos* and the city as a whole. The main weakness that sometimes prevented a top-level mark was taking Aristophanes' playful misrepresentation of the Thesmophoria at face value as serious or literal evidence for Athenian attitudes.

Question 130 produced many interesting and perceptive discussions of the play, but in general marks did not run as high as in Question 230. The main reasons for this were the failures to

- deploy sufficient knowledge of the text to support the argument
- cover all three aspects of the question, with religion most commonly receiving scant attention
- be consistently analytical in distinguishing between the everyday modern usage of the word tragedy and the specific dramatic genre.

### Question 2

Most candidates demonstrated some awareness of the context of Cicero's speech in Question 211. Difficulties in recalling the specific information required in Questions 212, 213 and 214 (for example, in Question 214 fewer than half the candidates knew that Cicero went on to impersonate Clodius) were generally compensated for by success in Question 220. Here there

were a large number of outstanding answers that confidently made use of relevant knowledge to put forward a strongly argued case.

The high standard was generally continued in Question 230. Candidates usually displayed a sound knowledge of the sources (though reference to Juvenal was often limited to Eppia and Messalina with adverse consequences for the evaluation element of the question), but they differed in their analytical skills. The best, keeping sharp focus on the question, clearly indicated that Cicero was referring to *sexual* passion (whereas, as some pointed out, the passionate desire of a woman to retain her reputation for chastity was praised rather than feared, as in the case of Lucretia). Moreover they went on to put forward a clear argument to show that Roman male fears, as expressed by men with very different purposes such as Cato and Juvenal, tended to focus not just, or even mainly, on sexual transgression but on other unbridled behaviours that might threaten male control and dominance.

### **Question 3**

Question 300 was rather less popular than Question 400, and slightly less well answered. In discussing the nature of the evidence – an important element of most essays in this unit – it was perfectly reasonable to assert that Ischomachus' picture was fictional and idealised; the evidence from the law courts is certainly different, but what was surprising was the number of candidates who believed that these speeches were factually accurate. (A useful and accessible corrective to this misunderstanding can now be found in Fiona Hobden's 'Did Euphiletus murder Eratosthenes?' in *Omnibus* 59, published by JACT January 2010.) Beyond this, the main weakness was a lack of supporting detail, particularly of the speeches, which often received very limited coverage compared to Ischomachus' conversation.

### **Question 4**

Most candidates were able to demonstrate a range of knowledge about many of the women listed in the bullet points. Weaknesses were more evident in the analysis of the evidence. Clearly this was not straightforward – the categories of 'personal qualities' and 'models of behaviour' are not mutually exclusive – and admitted a range of opinions. However, the best candidates argued that, at the extremes at least, there is a distinction to be made between the presentation of Lucretia by Livy in a morally motivated history as an *exemplum* of industriousness and chastity and the portrayal of Turia by her husband in a funeral eulogy as a woman of exceptional personal strength and initiative, whose loss was mourned with deeply felt sorrow. Reference to groups of women, rather than individuals, was given credit provided that it was used relevantly to inform the argument about what models of behaviour useful to men were deemed to be.