



General Certificate of Education

Classical Civilisation

CIV1F The Life and Times of Cicero

Report on the Examination

January examination - 2010 series

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CIV1F The Life and Times of Cicero

Most candidates made a sensible attempt to engage with the issues raised by the questions and generally showed some good insights into the life and times of Cicero. 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 was a vastly more popular choice than Question 2, and the standard of answers was generally higher too. Just over half the candidates scored full marks in Questions 111, 112 and 113, and most were able to pick up one of the marks in Questions 111 and 113, although they missed the other mark in each case because of various errors or omission. Most candidates too knew the main outline of events in Question 120 and attempted to analyse and assess Cicero's involvement. Some answers did not go beyond the battle of Pharsalus, but the best covered the whole period and made effective reference to the prescribed correspondence.

The best responses to Question 130 were especially encouraging in their grasp of detail and sharpness of analysis. Some weaker answers merely narrated or, despite attempting evaluation, either omitted one of the occasions on which Cicero became directly involved in the provinces or did not attempt even a brief assessment of his other priorities to provide balance to the argument. However, there were many fluent and convincing appraisals which showed a good overview of Cicero's career.

Question 2

Candidates who noted the date of the letter generally placed it in its proper context and gained some success in answering Questions 211, 212 and 213. However, a surprisingly large number missed the date, or misunderstood its significance, and by wrongly putting the letter in the context of Cicero's exile a decade or so earlier scored little on these questions.

However, despite an often inauspicious start most candidates were back on firmer ground with Questions 220 and 230. In the former, there were many perceptive assessments of Cicero's friendship with Atticus with comments mainly supported by some appropriate detail. In the latter, most attention was usually focused – quite reasonably – on Tullia and Terentia, but few candidates omitted all mention of other family relationships. As in Question 130, the best answers showed some insight in their appraisal of Cicero over the span of his career and rightly

judged his personal relationships in the light of behaviours that were normal for Romans with political ambitions, effectively citing detail from his correspondence where appropriate.

Question 3

Question 300 was overwhelmingly the more popular in Section Two (just as Question 1 was in Section One), but this time the overall performance was less good on the popular choice. The best answers showed a strong grasp of the whole period with a clear evaluative overview focused on the precise issue in the question. These often convincingly argued that, apart from at some key moments such as the *lex Manilia*, Cicero's desire to promote *concordia ordinum* after his consulship, and his exile, Cicero's relationship with Pompey down to 50 BC was relatively unimportant and failed to deliver what he hoped. Common weaknesses were the tendencies to

- narrate, especially on the trial of Verres and the Catilinarian conspiracy, without linking the material to judgements in response to the question
- omit significant parts of the period, especially Cicero's attempt to secure Pompey's support in 62 BC, as seen in the first of the prescribed letters, and everything after Cicero's return from exile
- include irrelevant material, especially on Cicero's relationship with Pompey during the Civil War.

Question 4

The standard of the far smaller number of answers to Question 400 was significantly higher, with two thirds of the candidates achieving Level 4 and a tenth reaching Level 5, the best performance on any question in Section 2 across all of the units. This was because candidates focused sharply on analysing the key issues of vigorous opposition and disastrous consequences and were able to deploy a good range of knowledge to support their judgements. Effective use was often made of the prescribed letters of Cicero to Trebonius and Plancus, as suggested by the bullet points. Several candidates perceptively argued that for a Roman who espoused traditional virtues and values as Cicero did, and who had considerable political ambitions, exile in 58 BC would have seemed more disastrous than death in 43. Candidates varied in their estimation of the seriousness of the threat to the republic posed by Catiline, but few were in any doubt about Cicero's miscalculation in courting Octavian to destroy Antony, and the fatal consequences of this policy for both Cicero and senatorial government.