



General Certificate of Education

Classical Civilisation

CIV1B Athenian Democracy

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – June series

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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CIV1B Athenian Democracy

General Comments

The entry for this option was comparable to that for summer 2009, and the average performance was also very similar.

The most common weaknesses were

- difficulties in sustaining an evaluative argument that was focused on the exact wording of the question
- a failure to explain the judgements with reference to sufficient well-chosen details over the whole scope of the essay
- relying too heavily on generalisations instead of critical examination of the prescribed primary sources.

However, the questions also elicited a good number of structured and informed arguments which demonstrated a high level of knowledge and understanding and a sophisticated ability to analyse and evaluate. Clearly many candidates had not only approached this area of study with enthusiasm and commitment, but had also developed both appropriate academic skills and perceptive insights into an aspect of the classical world.

Section One

Option A

Questions on the 6th century have always been more popular than those on the 5th century, and this pattern was repeated in this examination with Option A, based on a passage from Aristotle about Peisistratus, being chosen by more than three times as many candidates as Option B, based on a passage from Aristophanes' *Wasps*. Performance in the factual Questions 01 and 02 was very different. Whereas in the former only a disappointingly small number of candidates was able to refer to one of Aristotle's anecdotes about Peisistratus, in the latter the majority had some knowledge of Hipparchus' assassination, even if they did not score the full three marks.

The standard of answers to Question 03 was generally high, and a large number of candidates successfully combined detailed knowledge of events as described by Aristotle with sensible argument, often pointing out that the seizure of power was relatively easy, while its maintenance in the first two attempts was the problem. Responses to Question 04 were also generally very pleasing, with good understanding of the issues, although there was a tendency not to give equal weight to both political and economic matters but to focus on one or the other.

Option B

Questions 05 and 06, which required knowledge of details from the play itself, were confidently answered by most candidates, but responses to Question 07, which expected a wider understanding of Athenian democratic procedures, were far less secure, with fewer than half the candidates recognising Cydathenaeum and Aexone as demes (or even places) and fewer still knowing the use of a deme name as part of a citizen's identification.

In Question 08 opinions varied as to whether Aristophanes' treatment of Cleon is light-hearted or vicious, but what determined the marks awarded was not the view expressed but the ability to argue for it with well chosen detail from across the play, not just the beginning. However, even if the standard here was not quite as high as in the corresponding Question 03, most candidates made an attempt to produce an argument.

This was less common in Question 09. Although there were some excellent answers, only about one fifth of the candidates gained a mark in Level 4 or Level 5 (compared with nearly half in the corresponding Question 04), which reflected a lack of relevant knowledge and understanding of what was a crucial distinguishing feature of the Athenian system.

Section Two

Option C

The breadth of Question 10 meant that virtually all candidates had some relevant knowledge and interpretation to contribute and consequently a very high percentage of them achieved at least Level 3. However, a far smaller number reached Level 4, largely because essays were not shaped into an argument that responded to the exact wording of the question. In particular, there was insufficient attention to focusing precisely on the rights and power given to the poor, rather than simply providing general accounts of the reforms, and discussion of Cleisthenes' measures tended to miss some significant issues, for example the political importance he gave to demes.

Option D

The difference in the number of responses to Question 10 (6th century) and Question 11 (mainly 5th century) was even more marked than in Section One, with only about one in seven candidates choosing Question 11. However, at the top end, the performance was considerably better than in Question 10. Nearly half the candidates achieved Level 4 because they adopted an argumentative stance with a clear and sustained point of view, and the best of these showed not only a coherent understanding of the period as a whole and of the various factors influencing political development, but were also able to extend the discussion with well chosen material from the *Old Oligarch* and *Wasps*.