



General Certificate of Education

Classical Civilisation

CIV1E Menander and Plautus

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – June series

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CIV1E Menander and Plautus**General Comments**

The pleasing increase in the number of candidates for this option did not change its popularity in relation to the other topics. It still had by far the smallest entry. Regrettably, the increase in the number of candidates was accompanied by a slight worsening of the overall standard of performance.

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**

Recall of the factual information about *Old Cantankerous* required for Question 01 was very good, that for Question 02 less so. The best answers to Question 03 showed some perceptive insights into the nature of Menander's comedy, which were illustrated with well chosen details from the passage, while weaker answers merely provided some examples of jokes without explaining why they were entertaining.

Lack of detailed knowledge from across the whole play often prevented candidates from giving an effective answer to Question 04, but the more successful made a sensible attempt to evaluate the relative importance of the characters listed in terms of both plot advancement and comic contributions. Both here and in Question 03 Sikon the cook was often assumed to be female.

Option B

Unlike previously, the majority of candidates chose Option A on Menander, and only a very small number indeed attempted Option B on Plautus' *Amphitryo*. All of them gained at least three of the four marks in recalling the general situation for Question 05, but the answer to the more specific Question 06 was not well known.

All responses to Question 07 were in Level 3 or 4 and showed some understanding both of the way Plautus adopts the form of a tragedy in *Amphitryo* and especially of the near-catastrophe that Jupiter's antics cause to Amphitryo's household. By contrast, even though mockery of military valour is surely an obvious element in the play, answers to Question 08 tended to be weak, largely because ignorance of relevant detail meant little meaningful argument could be attempted.

Section Two

Option C

In Question 09, by far the more popular of the Section Two essays, there was a tendency for candidates to misunderstand the question and to interpret 'ridicule' as meaning 'punishment'. Therefore, although knowledge was generally sound apart from about *Amphitryo* (as might be expected from Section One), the argument was frequently not quite sufficiently sharply focused.

Option D

The smaller number of answers to Question 10 was generally of a considerably higher standard than those to Question 09. Half the candidates achieved a mark in Level 4 because they demonstrated a good range of knowledge from all four plays and showed some genuine insights into their original staging.