



General Certificate of Education

Classical Civilisation

CIV2C Athenian Vase Painting

Report on the Examination

June examination - 2010 series

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CIV2C Athenian Vase Painting

There was a wider range of performance in this second year of the new specification as was to be expected with a 300% increase in the number of candidates. Once again, there was clear evidence that the small number of candidates had used their time wisely, not only to study techniques of vase painting, but to place these paintings within their historical context. Enjoyment and enthusiasm were evident throughout. Unlike last year, the two initial sections attracted similar numbers of candidates, Option A on Euthymides being slightly more popular. The short questions in both sections were well done, particularly again those from Option A; the only real weakness was in identifying the cup shape in Question 07. Both 10-mark questions were well answered, with most candidates gaining Level 3 or above for Questions 04 and 11 respectively. Of the 20-mark essays, answers to Question 05 on the Berlin Painter were a little disappointing with most answers around the Level 3/4 border. Question 12 on paintings inside cups was better done, with a good number of Level 5 responses; there were no really weak answers to either question, all achieving at least half marks. Only a very few candidates chose Option D on white-ground technique for their 30-mark essay; those who did performed quite well. Much the more popular choice was Question 13 on scenes from mythology. Here performance was again high, with no mark falling below Level 3.

Option A

Questions 01 and 02 provided an excellent start and were known by every candidate. Performance on Question 03 was more mixed, with some candidates being reluctant to state the fairly obvious, given the help offered by the illustration. The 10-mark question on action poses (Question 04) was soundly but rather generally answered resulting in a preponderance of Level 3 answers. The better responses pointed out the mixed success at this stage with some quite awkward and unlikely poses on both vases. Only a minority of candidates reached Level 4 on this question. The longer essay, Question 05, was similarly quite well done, but frustrating in the lack of specific detail given to the styles of the three painters. Composition was often well covered, but the figures themselves are key differences between the three painters; few answers convincingly demonstrated major links between the painters, preferring for the most part to take each in isolation. This resulted in a series of quite good answers but none that reached Level 5. To keep this option in line with the historical and literary papers, candidates must analyse and make judgements in line with the question, not simply describe the works they have studied.

Option B

The series of single mark opening questions resulted in a mixed performance. Two thirds of candidates were close to the date in Question 06; few correct answers were given for Question 07; Questions 08, 09 and 10 caused very few problems. The 10-mark drapery question (Question 11) resulted in more higher scores than its counterpart in Option A. There were some excellent answers focusing on close observation of the two sets of figures. Perhaps the greater contrast between the two paintings here than in Question 04 helped, but comparative analysis was often far more incisive in Question 11. Candidates attempting Question 12 certainly knew their cup paintings. Even the weaker answers demonstrated a good range of knowledge and sat comfortably within Level 3; the majority went beyond this, venturing reasonable analysis of progression over the years; a small number reached Level 5 for providing a coherent and convincing argument throughout. One or two good efforts suffered a little through using expressions of extreme enthusiasm rather than supported judgement ('the painter uses the dolphins to give a fantastic feeling'); to reach top level marks the candidate must tell us why or how this feeling is achieved.

Option C

This question (Question 13) asked for a judgement, using examples, as to whether red-figure painting was more successful in portraying scenes from mythology than black-figure painting. A small number of candidates answered this in a most convincing way, employing a well-described series of vases to support their judgement; these answers reached Level 5. Rather more candidates produced a series of suitable examples, described them very fully, then passed a number of judgements in conclusion; most candidates reached Level 4 in this way, many in the lower range because their answers were generally analytical rather than tightly argued. There were no attempts that failed to indicate both interest and effort on behalf of the candidate. All quoted specific examples which were appropriate to the question. There were few significant errors (although one candidate reversed the appellation of the styles, talking at length about replacement of early 'red-figure' by more modern 'black-figure', but clearly understanding the progression in all other ways). In short, the answers were a delight to mark, but left a degree of frustration in some cases where, with a little thought, a good answer could have become an excellent one.

Option D

The small number of answers to this question (Question 14) reinforced the impression that white-ground painting is a rather specialised area of the specification. Candidates here showed a good range of examples and had clearly done their research, but found difficulty in suggesting ways in which their examples represented new opportunities. Most contented themselves with an in-depth look at four or more vases, treating each one as a self-contained unit. One candidate went some way beyond this, using the funerary nature of many of these vases as an argument for development. Although several described an early example featuring quite dramatic mythological scenes, then moved on to the more typical scenes of repose found on lekythoi, opportunities were missed to set these very different approaches in context and draw analysis from so doing. Again, to achieve correlation with the literary options, analysis needs to be tightly and consistently applied in line with the specific demands of each essay title.

In conclusion, it is a delight to see the increased number of candidates offering this option and taking such a clear and genuine interest in Athenian vase painting.