



General Certificate of Education

Classical Civilisation

CIV2D Athenian Imperialism

Report on the Examination

June examination - 2010 series

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CIV2D Athenian Imperialism

Many candidates revealed a good deal of knowledge in their answers, tending to deal best with the more concrete political events and set speeches; given that the relatively small number of inscriptions from 'The Athenian Empire' is a clear part of the prescribed reading, it remains disappointing that knowledge of these still appeared rather basic. Most candidates chose Option A over Option B in Section One, while the 30-mark essays on treatment of allies (Question 09) and Athens as a possible dictatorship (Question 10) were equally popular. The shorter questions, Questions 05 and 06, in Option B produced significantly higher marks than their counterparts Questions 01 and 02; the same was true with the 10-mark questions, although to a lesser degree, where Question 07 outscored Question 03. This position was dramatically reversed for the 20-mark questions, where scores for Question 04 on the events of 469-454 BC scored more highly than those for Question 08 on the post-Sicilian situation. The 30-mark dictatorship essay (Question 10) produced many more Level 4 and 5 answers than the partially inscription-based Question 09.

Option A

Only one in three candidates scored both marks for Question 01, many seeing a major Athens-Sparta divide in place some years earlier than was the case; Question 02 was better done, although again a hazy sense of chronology produced incorrect answers involving Pericles and the putting down of allied rebellions. Question 03 produced a number of good answers, but only a small proportion at Level 4. The question clearly asked for both information from the passage and subsequent events; many candidates restricted their answer to the latter. Generally analysis was present here; a minority of candidates slipped to Level 2 for simply retelling events with no reference to the 'how well' required by the question. Question 04 was a popular one, relating to a particularly significant (and usually well understood) period of time. Over half of all answers reached Level 4, a testament to candidates' continuous analysis and, perhaps, the relatively straightforward progression of events at this time. The small proportion who went on to reach Level 5 added a degree of sophistication by incorporating shades of grey in what were generally denunciations of Athenian motives and behaviour.

Option B

In Question 05 most candidates were able to set Pericles' speech within the context of an Athens which was besieged and devastated by plague. Similarly, they appeared confident in their knowledge of Pericles' qualities as claimed by Thucydides in Question 06. Nearly twice as many reached Level 4 in the 10-mark question on Athenian involvement in Sicily as on equivalent question in Option A. Perhaps the single focus here helped, without the need to incorporate information from the passage. Answers to the 20-mark question (Question 08) on events post-Sicily produced a preponderance of Level 3 answers and a small number of extremely weak responses; the political occurrences of these years are quite complex and there is little in the prescribed reading to support them. It may be that coming at the end of the specification, these events receive less attention than earlier ones. These years, however, are crucial to the specification as a whole, and candidates must have as good a grasp of this era as the early years so well shown in Question 04 on Option A.

Option C

As mentioned in the introduction, many candidates do not seem at ease with questions referring to the set inscriptions. This question combined the need for knowledge of these with an understanding of the political context in which they were set. Only a quarter of responses revealed such understanding, while the majority of answers clung to the security of the political

events, often dealing in a short general paragraph with the inscriptions. As last year, the Coinage Decree seemed to be the exception; a number of candidates wrote lucidly about the evidence of Athenian domination implied, then added counter-arguments relating to ease of trade. There were reassuringly few really poor answers, but again a whole body of responses fixed firmly within Level 3. There are advantages and disadvantages to answering a question for which there is an abundance of source material. Candidates should be aware of the temptation to spend the limited time available ensuring that they refer to every possible item of knowledge; the higher level candidates here discussed matters of responsibility, bringing in their knowledge where necessary in support of their argument. Too many (often quite lengthy) essays rarely mentioned issues of responsibility, hence the lack of Level 4 and 5 marks.

Option D

Candidates generally responded well to this invitation to discuss a number of the set speeches. Two caveats would be that a number went on to quote from speeches outside the years 432-427, and that another (very small) group failed to grasp that the focus of the question was on dictatorship, and was not simply a request to rephrase the speeches in question. There was also some confusion (as well as interesting discussion) over the question of whether a democracy by its very nature can be called a dictatorship and whether tyranny and dictatorship are synonyms. Most candidates understood and explained well the possible mixed motives of the Corinthian spokesman, then avoided falling into the trap of accepting that the use of the word tyranny by Athenian leaders obviated the need for further discussion. Views on the Cleon/Diodotus argument often provided strong differentiation; more perceptive candidates saw that there was significant difference of tone here, but not perhaps of substance relevant to the question; others saw in Diodotus' 'kinder approach' a sign that Athens was not so bad after all. Poor answers were very rare, with all but a handful of candidates reaching Level 3; in fact over half obtained a mark within Level 4, and if most lacked the degree of sophistication to go higher, many of these essays were a pleasure to mark.