



General Certificate of Education

Classical Civilisation

CIV1B Athenian Democracy

Report on the Examination

2011 examination – January series

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CIV1B Athenian Democracy

Option A

Answers to the short factual Questions 01 to 03 were generally well known. There were also many very pleasing responses to Question 04, with over half the candidates reaching Level 3 or above. Virtually all candidates attempted an appropriate evaluative judgement; what distinguished the more able was the ability to develop the argument and support it with relevant accurate knowledge.

Good standards were maintained in Question 05, and this time approximately four-fifths of the candidates reached Level 3 or above. Because of the phrasing of the quotation to be discussed and the consequent order of the suggestions in the bullet points, candidates tended correctly to give more attention to Solon's judicial reforms than has sometimes been the case in previous examinations. However, several did not understand precisely what each might have entailed and some conflated third-party redress and the right of appeal. Again, most attempted reasoned argument, the best setting their judgements in the context of Solon's aims as declared in his poetry.

Option B

Option B was attempted by only one-fifth of the number of candidates who chose Option A. Answers to Questions 06 to 08 on the Council (*Boule*) were generally of a comparable standard to those to Questions 01 to 03 on Solon, but in Question 09 only just over half the candidates made a convincing statement about one other complaint by the author, many of the rest just paraphrasing the passage.

In Question 10 most candidates attempted an evaluative argument rather than description and demonstrated some general understanding of the role of the Council (*Boule*), but the marks tended to be more polarised than in the parallel Question 04 with, pleasingly, a higher percentage of candidates demonstrating detailed knowledge at the very top and, disappointingly, a higher percentage too writing imprecisely at the bottom.

Question 11 also elicited some excellent balanced and informed arguments and consequently over 40% of the candidates achieved Level 4 and above. Below this, the standard was similar to that of Question 05, the main weaknesses being the lack of precise detail, particularly concerning the *graphe paranomon*, and a failure to make judgements on the assembly's strengths and weaknesses on the basis of the information given.

Option C

The take-up for Options C and D divided along very similar lines to that for Options A and B, candidates choosing overwhelmingly to write about the development towards democracy rather than the working of the radical democracy itself and the critique of it by Pseudo-Xenophon ('The Old Oligarch') and Aristophanes' *Wasps*.

The performance on the more popular Question 12 was slightly lower than that on Question 13. A major reason for this was the common tendency to narrate at huge length the expulsion of Hippias – often going outside the question back to 514BC – rather than analyse and evaluate its consequences for the growth of democracy, with the result that candidates often ran out of time

before they could give full consideration to the significance of the fleet in its development. Cleisthenes' reforms were generally adequately known, with more attention to the demes, more accuracy in the details of the tribal reforms and more focus on the significance (rather than mechanisms) of ostracism than in previous examinations. The best answers also made effective use of the sources, in particular and most pleasingly the views of Pseudo-Xenophon ('The Old Oligarch'), in discussing the importance of the navy.

Option D

Answers to Question 13, though considerably fewer in number than those to Question 12, showed for the most part a good knowledge of the play and some perceptive understanding of the issue raised by the question. Examiners were pleased that candidates tended to take Aristophanes' portrayal of Cleon less literally than in previous examinations. Many took the view that in a direct democracy such as Athens' it would be impossible to ridicule the leaders without also mocking the people on whom they depended for their power. Also very pleasing was the use of the whole play as a basis for discussion, including the preparations for the *symposion* and its outcome, so that responses were more balanced and comprehensive than before and demonstrated full engagement with the nature of Aristophanes' comedy.