



General Certificate of Education

Classical Civilisation

CIV1C Aristophanes and Athens

Report on the Examination

2011 examination – January series

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CIV1C Aristophanes and Athens

Option A

Candidates generally made a good start with Question 01, a high percentage gaining the full three marks and most giving at least two accurate points. However, in Questions 02 and 03, for one mark each, they tended to fare rather less well, with particular uncertainty in Question 02 about the precise festival Dikaiopolis is celebrating.

Scores in Question 04 were generally high: most candidates attempted an evaluative argument based on examples from the passage and so reached at least Level 3. Common weaknesses were to consider only part of the passage, to offer only partial explanation of why a particular joke was felt to be entertaining and/or to give generalised accounts of Aristophanes' comic techniques with little precise supporting evidence from the particular passage provided.

The high standard was maintained in Question 05. Virtually all candidates showed some understanding of some of the qualities a good Athenian citizen was expected to have and used their knowledge of the play – albeit sometimes with rather limited scope and detail – to test and explain the extent to which Dikaiopolis conforms to, or deviates from, the norm (and, as many pointed out, his name).

Option B

In line with previous examinations, *The Knights* (in Option B) was rather less popular than *The Acharnians* (in Option A). Of the short factual questions, Questions 06, 07 and 09, for one mark each, were accurately answered by most candidates but, rather surprisingly, in Question 08, which required recall of the basic starting point of the plot, only one-third scored both marks.

Responses to the passage in Question 10 were of a similar standard to those in Question 04; indeed, at the top end an even higher percentage reached Level 4 with some perceptive analysis, supported by well-chosen details from the passage, of Thepeople's comic description of the serious matter of holding leaders to account. Weaker answers often made insufficient reference to the passage to explain the views being expressed.

Answers to Question 11 were also generally highly commendable, although the spread of marks was slightly lower than that for Question 05, largely because candidates found it easier to support their argument with precise details from the clearly differentiated scenes of *The Acharnians* than the more similar rounds of the contest in *The Knights*. The most convincing arguments came from the candidates who addressed and balanced both parts of the question, developing their discussion by building on the suggestions in the bullet points rather than simply repeating them.

Option C

Question 12 was the more popular in Section Two, but only by a relatively small margin. The standard of work was generally very good with half the candidates producing an informed and reasoned argument worthy of a mark in Level 4, and almost all making sufficient attempt at evaluation to reach the bottom of Level 3 despite sometimes deploying limited knowledge of the text in support. It was, of course, important to discuss both plays and to do more than simply provide a résumé of the plots.

Most candidates agreed with the verdicts of the Athenian judges, adducing a greater or lesser range of appropriate details to demonstrate weaknesses of plot, characterisation and comic targets in *Peace*. Better answers not only gave more detail but also tended to take into account the historical context of each play.

Option D

Candidates' performance in Question 13 was also very pleasing; indeed, the marks tended to be even higher than for Question 12. Most were able to support their judgements with a range of appropriate details. The commonest weakness, apart from a failure to discuss a wide enough range of characters from across all three plays, was a lack of discrimination, so that – surely contrary to the evidence – Aristophanes' treatment of his contemporaries was judged to be uniformly harsh without gradation. Again, the best answers made effective use of what is known about some of these characters off the comic stage.