



General Certificate of Education

## **Classical Civilisation**

CIV1D Women in Athens and Rome

## **Report on the Examination**

*2011 examination – January series*

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## CIV1D Women in Athens and Rome

### Option A

Overall the short factual questions were answered competently, but there was some variation in accuracy: for example, answers to Question 02 were almost always correct, whereas in Question 04 some candidates did not address how Mnesilochus tried to avoid his manhood being revealed, focusing instead on how it was concealed in the first place.

Several weaknesses emerged in answers to Question 06. Some candidates wandered far from the passage, while others responded only to the first few lines of it. The best answers commented on a range of examples from across the whole passage and made some attempt to explain the entertainment value of the details they had chosen with some understanding of the preoccupations of the original, (largely) male audience.

In Question 07, about half the candidates produced a sufficiently informed and coherent argument to merit a mark in Level 4. Most of the rest fell within Level 3 because they demonstrated sufficient range of knowledge and some attempt at evaluation. However, the main weaknesses were (1) focusing either on effeminate men and foreigners with little attention to women, or *vice versa*, and (2) lacking discrimination in evaluating which of these targets is treated more harshly, an extreme word which should have aroused more challenge. However, the best answers covered the full range of topics suggested in the bullet points, took into account the anxieties of Athenian males on which Aristophanes is playing (and which, according to some candidates, he is mocking more strongly than women themselves), and appreciated that Aristophanes is humorously undermining his absurdly hostile portrayal of women by choosing to parody Euripidean plays in which they appear as victims rather than vengeful viragos.

### Option B

This option, based on two passages from Livy, was rather less popular than Option A on *Women at the Thesmophoria*. Answers to the factual Questions 08 and 09 were again generally satisfactory, though some candidates had difficulty making the full three points required for Question 08.

Responses to Question 10 were generally better than those to Question 06. A few candidates irrelevantly attempted to discuss all the prescribed extracts from Livy, but the majority focused just on the two earliest legends as required and, although some merely narrated, many showed some insight in analysis of differences as well as similarities. Consequently a considerably higher percentage reached Level 4 than in Question 06.

Answers to Question 11 also showed an improvement over those to Question 07 at the upper end. Although some candidates did not appreciate that the situation in Rome was different from that in Athens, most were able to support their views with some relevant examples. The model of behaviour that Cornelia was believed to have set was generally particularly well known; knowledge of Turia (though crucial for this essay), Arria and Calpurnia was less secure, as was its application to the argument. However, the best answers, as well as demonstrating insight based on sound knowledge of the sources, took into account both changes over time and the motivation of the authors on whose evidence we depend for our judgements.

### Option C

Even more candidates chose to write about Athens in Section Two than did so in Section One, although this has not been a consistent pattern in previous examinations where it has been possible to focus on one culture or the other. In Question 12 most candidates, though by no means all, showed, at least by implication, that they had some idea of the meaning of 'preoccupied with status', but in summarising the various texts they often lost sight of the precise argument – which was then diluted into being generally about men's treatment of women – and so scored in Level 3 rather than in Level 4. However, answers at the top of Level 4 and in Level 5 typically assessed the emphasis placed on the status of both men and women in the sources as well as the purposes for which they were written or spoken.

### Option D

In Question 13 there was a tendency not to give sufficient or consistent attention to the phrase 'in power' and so to put forward an argument that lacked the sharp focus on political dissidence that was expected. Nevertheless, marks were generally rather higher than in Question 12, because of greater knowledge and more systematic application of the sources, and more consistent discussion of the motives of the various authors in writing. It was particularly pleasing how many candidates understood the Augustan context of the *Laudatio Turiae*. The best arguments tended to make a link between women's behaviour in the political sphere and their dutifulness to their family; for example, it was argued that extreme devotion to the husband could justify disobedience to political authority, especially in the imperial period, whereas in the republican period what was viewed as women's interference in politics could be used to cast doubt on their chastity, family loyalty and moral integrity.