



**General Certificate of Education
June 2011**

Classical Civilisation 2020

CIV1C: Aristophanes and Athens

Report on the Examination

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CIV1C Aristophanes and Athens

Section One

Option A

A high degree of accuracy was shown in the answers to Questions 01, 02 and 04, and in Question 01 it was particularly pleasing that so many candidates knew the technical term '*parabasis*'. A high proportion of candidates also scored full marks in Question 03, although a significant minority merely mentioned victory at Pylos without giving a further detail for the second mark.

The wide scope of Question 05, on this occasion not limited to the passage, enabled candidates to produce a range of answers based on material from across the play. However, the spread of marks was slightly lower than the passage-based 10-mark question in Option B (Question 10), largely because some candidates did not sufficiently consider the contributions of the Chorus to the serious points of the play in addition to the humour.

By contrast, the overall performance on Question 06 was higher than on the corresponding Question 11. Weaker answers tended just to give examples of greed and corruption with little evaluation focused on the quotation in the question, and many omitted to discuss the importance of Thepeople's role despite his inclusion in the bullet points. However, the best responses achieved a balanced assessment of Aristophanes' priorities in *The Knights* and showed some good insights into the nature both of Aristophanic comedy and of the Athenian democracy.

Option B

This was rather more popular than Option A, perhaps because *Peace* seems to candidates to be a more straightforward play than *The Knights*. Most candidates knew the answer to Question 07 but, rather surprisingly, in Question 08 only two-thirds of them knew where exactly the other gods had gone, 'on holiday' being a frequent imprecise response. Again, in Question 09, it was surprising that fewer than half the candidates gained the full 3 marks, and fewer than two-thirds 2 of the marks, where candidates could select from a wide range of points across a large part of the first half of the play.

As already noted, Question 10 was generally well answered, and many candidates showed a fine understanding and evaluation of Aristophanes' comic techniques with appropriate reference to the passage. Weaker answers tended to mention just a couple of points, despite the 30 lines of the passage, without adequate explanation or development to create an argument.

Whereas in Question 06 the greater complexity of *The Knights* seemed to inspire candidates to show greater depth in their analysis, responses to Question 11 tended to produce rather superficial judgements on *Peace*. There were candidates who responded to all the elements of the quotation in the question and discussed them with reference to a range of issues as prompted by the bullet points, but work of this calibre was rarer than in Question 06. Some candidates gave too much attention to the role and status of women in Greek and modern society without linking this to a detailed examination of the play; others did not make sufficient use of the bullet points which, although not mandatory, should have acted as a stimulus to widen the argument with an assessment of the play as a whole.

Section Two

Option C

More candidates chose Option C than Option D, perhaps because it required discussion of only one play. Weaker answers tended merely to list occasions when Dikaiopolis does something perceived to be crazy, but more successful responses considered both parts of the question, with the best showing in the process some perceptive insights into the nature of Aristophanes' comedy.

Option D

Although slightly less popular than Question 12, Question 13 produced a higher proportion of candidates in Levels 4 and 5. Those who merely summarised the plots, or considered only one of the two plays, were limited in their rewards, but there were relatively few of these. Most made some attempt to produce a balanced argument that weighed up the importance to each play of both nostalgia and a contemporary message, and the best set evaluation of the plays firmly in their different historical contexts. Throughout the paper there was much evidence that candidates had not only enjoyed their study of these particular comedies but also gained a deeper understanding of comedy as a dramatic genre and its relationship to politics.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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