



**General Certificate of Education  
June 2011**

**Classical Civilisation 2020**

**CIV2C: Athenian Vase Painting**

***Report on the Examination***

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## CIV2C Athenian Vase Painting

### General Comments

This option continues to attract a relatively low number of candidates, but once again it was clear that those who sat the examination had enjoyed the topic and had attempted to see Athenian vases in the context of the society which produced them. There were fewer top level responses this year, partly because many candidates showed little interest in the actual methods of painting and were often rather vague on the development of figure drawing over the period of study. 75% of candidates chose Option A focusing on the Berlin Painter, rather than the later Achilles Painter in Option B. The short questions in both sections were generally well answered, although the *oinochoe* (jug/wine pourer) was rarely named for Question 06. There were no really weak answers to either of the 10-mark questions, although Question 09 on the Achilles Painter produced generally better responses with many more top level marks than the equivalent question on the Berlin Painter; the mean marks were 80% and 73% respectively, although an identical figure (85%) of candidates reached at least Level 3 on each. Of the 20-mark essays, Question 10 on the Achilles and Meidias Painters was generally better done than the Option A alternative comparing the Berlin Painter to two others. Both, however, were quite disappointing for the reasons mentioned above, with candidates tending to produce rather general examples and, in one or two cases, no examples at all in support of their arguments. Question 11 comparing black and early red-figure techniques was much better done, with nearly half of candidates reaching at least Level 4. Question 12, on everyday life, was attempted by only two candidates, in both cases unconvincingly.

### Section One

#### Option A

Questions 01, 02 and 03 provided a good start for most candidates although only two thirds were able to date the vase illustrated. Performance on Question 03 was excellent, with all but a handful naming two of the characters correctly. The 10-mark question asking how typical the paintings were (04) produced no poor answers but not a single top mark. Many candidates failed to discuss whether the paintings were 'typical', preferring to simply describe both in detail. The better responses pointed out differences between the two, often seeing the painting in A as the more typical. 28% of candidates reached Level 4 on this question. There were similar problems with the longer essay (05) where 38% of candidates reached at least Level 4, but only one candidate went on to achieve Level 5. Many essays frustratingly omitted one of the named painters; very few discussed all three in detail. There were too many errors of attribution and too little discussion of differences in style between the three painters. As with a similar question last year, few answers convincingly demonstrated major links between the painters, preferring for the most part to take each in isolation. Candidates must analyse and make judgements in line with the question, not simply describe the works they have studied.

#### Option B

Apart from naming the type of jug, candidates found few problems with the opening short questions: all dated the vase correctly for Question 07, while the theme of the painting (08) was soundly described. The 10-mark question (09) on how typical the paintings were of the Achilles Painter produced much higher scores than its counterpart in Option A. Over half of candidates achieved a top level mark, while all bar one reached Level 3. There were some excellent answers bringing out well the two very different styles of painting while suggesting that each in its way was quite typical of the painter. Possibly the very different media portrayed here

(compared to the pair in 04) helped candidates, but the level of comparative analysis was much higher in answers here. The follow-up question (10) also produced some good responses, although none sufficiently incisive to reach Level 5. Most candidates knew the two painters well but found a problem in assessing whether the Meidias Painter represented something new or simply a continuum; those who argued for the Meidias Painter representing a great improvement on the standards of the Achilles Painter were certainly running counter to received wisdom but were given full credit where they supported their arguments with illustrations from both painters. Less able candidates again need to note that expressions of extreme enthusiasm rather than supported judgement will not produce marks within the top levels; candidates must explain why and how such positive feelings are achieved.

## **Section Two**

### **Option C**

Question 11 was answered by almost all candidates. It asked them to provide examples to assess whether black-figure painting could reach as high a level of quality as early red-figure examples. One or two candidates strayed beyond the bounds of 'early' red-figure, but most made wise use of the bullet points and produced some good work on both methods. Just under half achieved at least Level 4: these candidates knew their vases and painters, introducing and describing four or five examples in support of a coherent argument. Most of the others knew some good examples and described them without providing too much in the way of an answer to the question; hence there was a plethora of Level 3 answers. There were only a couple of responses which failed to reach Level 3. Gratifyingly, the progression within black-figure from the Amasis Painter to Exekias was well understood and described. The techniques of incision were usually better described than the corresponding painting methods of the red-figure Pioneers. There were occasional significant errors: one candidate attributed black-figure prowess to the Pioneers. Nonetheless, many answers were a delight to mark, even if a few promised more in the earlier sections than they delivered once they moved on to discuss red-figure examples.

### **Option D**

The two responses to this question (12) were rather disappointing. A major problem was clearly in establishing what comprises 'everyday life'. A number of examples offered were from mythology, which led to lengthy but irrelevant discussion of Trojan War scenes or similar. Both candidates introduced the requisite number of examples but were uncertain as to what would count as 'success'. In one case a general description of each vase was given in isolation which, combined with the problem that not all examples could be seen as being from everyday life, led to a mark in Level 2. The other candidate reached high Level 3 by introducing a better range of examples: despite some sensible discussion however, there were few convincing arguments to demonstrate their relative degrees of success.

In conclusion, it was slightly disappointing to see the mixed level of performance in this unit, particularly given the clear evidence of enjoyment and effort provided by most candidates. It is to be hoped that the suggestions made above will be helpful in preparing for the 2012 examination.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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