



**General Certificate of Education  
June 2011**

**Classical Civilisation 2020**

**CIV3A: Mycenaean Civilisation**

***Report on the Examination***

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## CIV3A Mycenaean Civilisation

### General Comments

The examiners were pleased, once again, to see a substantial number of candidates for this unit, now in its second year. The standard of the best work was high, and there were some good answers in all four options. Many candidates had well-developed analytical skills which they demonstrated in their answers to the 10 and 20-mark questions. As last year, there was less evidence than in the previous specification of difficulty in time-management, though a few candidates still devoted too much time to the 20-mark essay at the evident expense of the 40-mark synoptic question. There was encouraging evidence of familiarity with the archaeological material and trends in its interpretation, and of some excellent and committed teaching. Once again, however, the examiners noted some candidates with extremely poor writing and spelling skills. There is still a visible tendency for a few less sophisticated candidates to provide descriptive rather than analytical answers, or to use everything they remember about a particular topic, whether appropriate to the question or not.

### Section One

#### Option A

This was the more popular of the structured questions, probably reflecting greater engagement with the sizeable body of knowledge and speculation on Mycenae, palace cultures and their physical remains. Most answers to Question 01 correctly dated the Treasury of Atreus (or Tomb of Agamemnon) to around 1400-1200 BC. In Question 02 candidates defined the tomb as a *tholos* or beehive tomb with a *dromos*, and extended this knowledge in Question 03 into a discussion of the architectural success of the building-form, demonstrating awareness of its reliance on corbel-construction, the purpose of the relieving triangle over its door, the construction techniques involved, sitting, size and longevity. Candidates were then able to turn their attention in Question 04 to the evidence provided by other building remains at Mycenae and use this evidence to discuss the use and status of the buildings as evidence for understanding Mycenaean society. Most candidates considered at least some of the evidence provided by the nature of the surviving remains, domestic, military or both, and discussed consequent assumptions about their users, and gave a view of the limitations of the evidence.

#### Option B

There were fewer answers to Option B. Many candidates identified the Pylos priestess, occasionally misidentifying her in Question 05 as her parallel at Tiryns. Most answers to Question 06 were aware of the technique of fresco painting and backed this up in Question 07 with knowledge of the characteristic hairstyle, clothing forms, profile head with full face eye, jewellery, and gender-related pale skin colour. Many answers to Question 08 were aware of other sources of information, both visual and documentary, but less inclined to think about other types of desirable knowledge including cut, fabrics, construction, and class and gender-related regulation. Many answers to Question 09 were more successful on the limitations and advantages of paintings as evidence for Mycenaean life, and not least on the problems of treating them as documentary illustration.

## **Section Two**

### **Option C**

A gratifying number of answers to Question 10 demonstrated that candidates were knowledgeable about, and interested in, the study of metalwork as a source of information on taste, wealth and power, trade, and overseas contacts; some also discussed the state of our knowledge of sources of ores, precious or otherwise, and were able to display understanding of fabrication techniques, and the contingent discussion about the makers' skills and the extent of their travel and migration. There was some useful discussion of the nature and quality of the evidence base involved and the possible bias integral to using it.

### **Option D**

The numerous good answers to Question 11, which was slightly more popular than Question 10, handled discussion of the importance of trade and seafaring to Mycenaean Greece in a sophisticated and well-informed way. They were able to discuss evidence for the geographical spread of Mycenaean trading activity, the commodities the Mycenaeans used, the luxuries they wanted (for example, gold, amber, bronze weapons, objects of glass and ivory), and the evidence provided by foreign objects such as grave-goods. Some considered issues of later local adaptation or acquired expertise, debts to the material cultures of Crete, Egypt and others, and finds of Mycenaean objects elsewhere. There was evident awareness in the better answers of the problems of separating the native Mycenaean from the foreign, and also of the problems of discussing trade when most of the evidence is the end-product.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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