



**General Certificate of Education
June 2012**

Classical Civilisation 2020

CIV2F: The Second Punic War

Report on the Examination

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CIV2F The Second Punic War

General Comments

There was a much more even spread of marks on this unit this year. 76% of entrants chose Option A. There was little difference in performance between the options for the initial short questions. These factual 'starters' were much better known this year although there were weaknesses of detail in Questions 02 and 07. Option B fared rather better on the 10 and 20-mark questions. Of the former, the passage on Masinissa's behaviour (Question 08) was much better answered than Question 03 on the 'terror in Rome'; this was surprising as both were similar literary questions asking students to refer closely to two quite striking passages. In the 20-mark essays, the minority group who answered Question 09 on Syphax and Masinissa was outperformed by the majority (possibly because Question 04 was based on the more popular (and better known) topic of events post Cannae), though the very best answers came from Question 09. There was again this year a very even performance between the 30-mark alternatives although only 18% braved Question 11 on Livy and Plutarch. It was pleasing to see much better work on this literary theme this year with 40% of students reaching Level 4 here, slightly higher than those attempting Question 10 on Hannibal. There was an equal percentage of Level 5 answers on each question.

Option A

Most students started well by identifying Varro for Question 01; performance on Question 02 was more mixed. Here a minority made points from before or after the battle and so lost marks. Most at least mentioned the wounding/death of Paullus and the fact that Roman losses were considerable. Last year's comments about the tendency of students to generalise rather than use the passage for the analysis required for Question 03 held good again in 2012. A number criticised the passage for historical inaccuracy (or Livy for not even trying – 'to write of it is beyond my strength') rather than looking at how he sought to create literary effects. There were however some very good answers quoting a number of key phrases, then analysing how successfully Livy made his point for each. Question 04, on a similar topic to the equivalent question last year, produced a more mixed response from students. While many expositions of the post-Cannae situation dealt well with the immediate aftermath in Rome, comparing the positive responses of Fabius and others to the lack of urgency shown by Hannibal in failing to march on the city, few if any mentioned Hannibal's attempts to ransom the survivors, or the events later in 216, beyond a general mention of Fabius' delaying tactics. Again a significant minority of students ignored the gap between Books XXII and XXIX, a few even suggesting that Scipio Africanus headed for Africa in 216 to lure Hannibal away from marching on Rome. Carthaginian support (or lack of it) for Hannibal after Cannae was often dealt with in a single sentence. Some students gave very good detail here and received credit for doing so. However, more than half the essays remained quite general and scored no higher than Level 3.

Option B

Apart from Question 08, Option B was less well done than Option A. Syphax and Masinissa play key roles in the later books set, but as both are named individuals in the Specification it is important that students know at least the basic detail of their earlier careers. Most started well gaining both marks for Question 05 and Question 06, but performance on Question 07 was more mixed. The use of poison was known but the part Scipio played in Sophonisba's demise often led to confusion. The comments regarding students' approaches to Question 03 above were again applicable in Question 08, if to a lesser extent: this passage offered an opportunity to show an appreciation of Livy's literary techniques and when treated in this way provided good

marks. Many of the good answers saw an essential understanding for Masinissa's dilemma implicit in the emotional language in which Livy couches Sophonisba's pleas; this was often balanced by Livy's overt racism (as in 'characteristic inflammability of the Numidian race'), while the double-edged meaning of 'reckless and unworthy of his honour' was taken as both critical and sympathetic at the same time. The essay on Masinissa and Syphax (09) tended to be rather thin on detail. Many students were aware of the advantages the Numidian cavalry brought to Rome in the final battles (often sensibly contrasted to earlier battles such as Cannae when the same force had been instrumental in defeating Rome). Unfortunately, few put this into context by sketching in Syphax's earlier pro-Roman days, the two leaders' fight for supremacy in Numidia and the part this played in helping or hindering Scipio's plans to move into Africa.

Section Two

Option C

Question 10 asked students to assess the reasons for Hannibal's early successes up to Cannae not the later battles against Fabius and Scipio as a few took it to be. Most showed a confident outline knowledge of this period, discussing Hannibal's emergence as leader, battles in Spain (primarily Saguntum), his crossing of the Alps and the series of victories culminating in Cannae. Many contented themselves with a chronological survey of these years, sometimes appending a line or two of 'analysis' to each paragraph, sometimes not even going this far. These essays rose no higher than Level 3. At the lower reaches, others were fixated on the crossing of the Alps; which is fine as long as the points made (his leadership skills v losing many men; his vision in tackling such a mission v Roman lack of foresight in opposing him etc.) were tied to the essay, but this was rarely the case. As often with the 'to what extent..?' type question, students pick an extreme view, then attempt to justify it to the hilt, leaving the (usually reasonable) alternative view untried. This leads to some very forced judgements: for example here most students set out to prove Hannibal's brilliance as total, thereby feeling the need to play down any Roman weaknesses in case these should prejudice their case. The better essays left a final response to the title until they had weighed the pros and cons of each line of argument. Where this was done using good evidence and sound argument, students did not need to fear being penalised if their discussions led to them 'sitting on the fence' in their concluding remarks.

Option D

This was the third time that an essay comparing Livy and Plutarch as writers has been set. In 2009 very few students attempted this option; rather more did so in 2011, although many of the weaknesses apparent the first time around still remained. This year a minority of entrants again opted to compare the authors, producing some reasonable answers and a few good ones. Very few students are now unaware of the different eras in which each wrote, the fact that Livy is a main source for Plutarch, the one being a 'historian' (with some interesting discussion of what that meant in Imperial Rome), the other a biographer and that these differences result in quite different areas of content, points of focus etc. However fundamental problems remain for a number of students: it must be repeated yet again that Plutarch is as important to this unit as Livy; a number of answers, although fewer than in previous years, failed to deal with Plutarch in any significant detail. Also, as in any essay, opinions are essential, but they must be supported by close reference to the texts. There was some evidence that students are learning this; several pointed out that Livy and Plutarch deal very differently with the battle of Cannae; one or two of these then went on and to show how they did this and to illustrate their arguments with examples.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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