

## AS LEVEL

*Examiners' report*

# CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

**H008**

For first teaching in 2017

## **H008/21 Summer 2019 series**

Version 1

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## Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates. The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report. A full copy of the question paper can be downloaded from OCR.

## Paper 21 series overview

The enduring enjoyment of candidates in reading and studying the plays was evident in their answers. It was pleasing to see references to performances of the plays which the candidates had seen, either live or as recordings. Candidates seemed less secure in the new element of the material sources, but even here all candidates seemed to be able to analyse the pot and come to reasoned conclusions. Candidates should be aware that the focus of study should be the plays themselves, and their historical and cultural context. The material culture element should be studied as part of this context.

## Section A overview

Candidates generally showed a sound awareness of the plot and characters of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, but at times lacked specific knowledge of the precise details needed to answer the questions. Knowledge of the material culture source was less sound, as evidenced in the answers made by the candidates.


### Question 1 (a)

**Source A: Fragment of a pot by the Capodarso Painter**



- 1 (a) Identify the scene from Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* shown on the fragment in **Source A**.  
Make **two** points. [2]

About half of the candidates were able to successfully identify the scene shown on the fragment of the pot and make two points about what it shows. Many thought that the figure on the left is Tiresias, or that the scene shown is at the end of the play when Oedipus has blinded himself.

|   |                   |  |
|---|-------------------|--|
|  | <p><b>AfL</b></p> | <p>Candidates would benefit from having a full understanding of who the figures on each pot listed in the specification are, and what the scene which is depicted shows.</p> |
|---|-------------------|--|

## Question 1 (b)

(b) Give **one** reason why this scene is important in the plot of *Oedipus the King*.

[1]

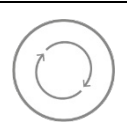
Many candidates were able to make inferences about how the scene depicted on the fragment of the pot was important in the play, with a variety of responses dealing with the reactions of Jocasta and Oedipus to the news, and how this scene led to the tragic ending of the play.

## Question 2

2 Name **one** of Oedipus' children shown on the fragment in **Source A**.

[1]

Most, but not all, candidates correctly identified one of the children of Oedipus.

|   |            |  |
|---|------------|--|
|  | <b>AfL</b> | To answer this type of question, there is no need for candidates to write a full sentence. Time can be saved by writing a one/two-word answer. |
|---|------------|--|

## Question 3

3 Explain how useful this fragment of a pot is in showing how a Greek tragedy may have been staged.

Make **four** points and support each point with reference to **Source A**.

[8]

Candidates were generally able to consider a range of evidence from the fragment which showed different aspects of the staging of a Greek tragedy. Candidates discussed features such as costumes, gestures, the *skene* and stage. Masks were also mentioned, and some concluded that the fragment is not useful as it is difficult to tell whether the actors are wearing masks or not. Some candidates commented on the fact that Oedipus, Jocasta and their daughters are not on stage together as showing artistic licence. The fragmentary nature of the pot was also cited as a reason for the pot not being a useful source.


Better answers wrote separate paragraphs, each dealing with one point and referring to Source A, as seen in Exemplar 1.

Exemplar 1

This fragment of a pot is useful in showing how a Greek tragedy may have been staged as it depicts the costumes of the tragic actors. The actors all wear long robes demonstrably that they are taking in a position of power and to be taken seriously.

As well as this, the fragment of a pot is very useful as it appears to depict the scene directly from the play. The actor of the messenger, despite speaking to Oedipus and Jocasta, is facing the audience suggesting that they are personally

The exemplar shows two paragraphs which were made in the answer, each clearly dealing with one point, which makes it easier for the examiner to understand the argument.

|   |                             |  |
|---|-----------------------------|--|
|  | <p><b>Misconception</b></p> | <p>Many candidates had a misconception about the 'three actors rule'. The rule refers to speaking parts, and so the fragment is useful in showing that extra non-speaking actors appeared in Greek tragedies, including children (played by boys).</p> |
|---|-----------------------------|--|

## Question 4

Source B: Sophocles *Oedipus the King* 246 – 268

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4 Why does Oedipus refer to Apollo (line 10)?

[1]

Most candidates achieved the mark in this question, with a range of acceptable answers including Apollo's role as god of prophecy and medicine, as well as sending the plague on Thebes.

## Question 6

6 Explain how Sophocles uses dramatic irony effectively in this passage.  
Make **four** points and support each point with reference to **Source B**.

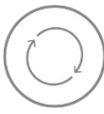
[8]

Most candidates were aware of the nature of dramatic irony and were able to apply their knowledge to the passage to find examples, of which there were many. Candidates were credited for referencing examples from the passage and explaining why the quotation is dramatically ironic. Some answers gave examples from the passage and stated that this is ironic, without explaining why, which would not have been credited. As with Question 3, the clearest method of answering the question is through the use of separate paragraphs, each making one point, as seen in the exemplar.



## Exemplar 2

|  |
|--|
| Oedipus says "I will fight for him as if he were my father", which is ironic as we know Laius was his father.  |
| Oedipus says that he has "a wife who shares our seed ... why our seed might be the same" which creates irony as we know that he <del>is</del> is a product of the king's seed - he is his son, and he is sleeping with his own mother. |

|  |            |   |
|--|------------|---|
|  | <b>AfL</b> | Candidates should make four separate points in answering this type of question. If the same point is made more than once, but with a different example, it is only credited once. In the exemplar, the point about Laius being Oedipus' father is repeated, but credit is given in the second paragraph for reference to Jocasta being Oedipus' mother. |
|--|------------|---|

## Question 7

- 7\* 'Oedipus' downfall was caused only by his search for the truth.' Explain how far you agree with this statement.

You may use **Source A** and/or **Source B** as a starting point, and your own knowledge in your answer. [16]

Candidates were able to produce arguments to both agree and disagree with the quotation in the question. Better answers engaged with the 'only' part of the question and produced balanced discussion of both how his search for the truth caused his downfall, and how other factors and people contributed to his downfall.

Candidates cited Oedipus' refusal to give up on his search, despite warnings from Tiresias, Jocasta and the Theban shepherd as evidence for his search for the truth being the cause of his downfall. Other factors mentioned included his personality traits of stubbornness and pride, as well as external factors such as Fate and the gods, or even the actions of his parents and the Theban shepherd. Weaker answers focused largely on the fate of Oedipus without acknowledging some of his faults or the part played by other figures.


These approaches can be seen in the two exemplars, one from the middle of an answer, and one from the conclusion, which deal with aspects other than his search for the truth. The second exemplar in particular succinctly summarises the candidate's consideration of a range of factors which contributed to Oedipus' downfall.


### Exemplar 3

Some may say however Oedipus downfall was inevitable from the start, caused by his mere existence. The prophecy foretold, before his birth, that he would kill his father and marry his mother. Therefore it seems that his downfall was caused by divine laws of fate not only his own search for the truth.

Exemplar 4

I do agree with the statement as far as saying that Oedipus' search for the truth was a contributing factor in leading to his downfall. However, I disagree with the use of the term 'only', as other factors influenced the situation. All of the events which would be held against him by others and himself occurred prior to any search on Oedipus' part for the truth.

|   |                   |  |
|---|-------------------|--|
|  | <p><b>AfL</b></p> | <p>Although there is no requirement for candidates to use the sources on the paper, it would be beneficial for candidates to refer to them in their answers.</p> |
|---|-------------------|--|

|   |                             |  |
|---|-----------------------------|--|
|  | <p><b>Misconception</b></p> | <p>There was confusion about the prophecies mentioned in the play. Many candidates assumed that the same prophecy was given to Laius and Jocasta, and to Oedipus. Jocasta simply mentions that they were told that their son would kill his father, and does not say anything about him marrying his mother.</p> |
|---|-----------------------------|--|

## Section B overview

As with Section A, candidates showed a sound knowledge of both plays, and were able to use this knowledge as evidence for their arguments. Candidates who planned the essay tended to achieve a higher mark than those that did not. Question 8 proved to be marginally more popular than Question 9, but candidates did equally well on both questions.

### Question 8

- 8\* Explain how far you agree that Pentheus' arrogance, stubbornness and excessive anger are the main reasons for his death in *Bacchae*. Justify your response with close reference to the text. [25]

Answers showed that candidates had a good grasp of events within the play. Most candidates were able to produce examples of where Pentheus' behaviour showed arrogance, stubbornness and excessive anger, and discuss the effect these had in causing his death. Some answers focused on Pentheus' treatment by Dionysus, rather than the factors leading to his death.

Better answers considered the three factors separately, dealing with each in turn. They also considered other factors, such as Pentheus' refusal to accept Dionysus as a god, and his curiosity about what the women were getting up to on Mount Cithaeron. This is illustrated in the extracts in the exemplar taken from the start, middle and end of the essay, which show both consideration of other factors and the separate discussion of the factors in the quotation.

### Exemplar 5

~~In the Bacchae~~  
 At the end of the Bacchae  
 Pentheus meets his grisly fate  
~~off~~ at the hands of his mother  
 after being characterised as  
 arrogant, stubborn, and  
 excessively angry for the majority  
 of the play. However, I believe  
 although these traits of Pentheus  
 are significant reasons for his  
 death - they are not the main  
 or sole ones as other contributing  
 factors include his irreverence  
 and Dionysus' punitive nature.

Pentheus' stubbornness is also highlighted when he refuses to ~~change~~ stop his plotting even when the disguised Dionysus offers him a chance at redemption and survival when he says to Pentheus "my friend it is not too late to turn this around!" Pentheus' arrogance is also shown in this scene when he exclaims to the disguised god "I have more authority than you!"

To conclude, I disagree with this statement as I believe although Pentheus' ~~arrogance~~ arrogance, anger, and stubbornness were contributing factors to his demise they were not the 'main' ones as his inexperience and Dionysus' punitive nature etc were arguably more important in ensuring Pentheus' death at the end of Bacchae.

## Question 9

- 9\* 'The only purpose of *Frogs* was to make the audience laugh.' With close reference to the text, explain how far you agree with this statement. Justify your response. [25]

Candidates showed a good knowledge of the content of Aristophanes' *Frogs*. They were able to use this to provide evidence for their opinions in their answers. Most tackled both sides of the question – how Aristophanes made his audience laugh, and the more serious, didactic elements of the play. Candidates were aware of the different types of humour found within the play, but did not always provide examples from the text to show this, as is seen in the first exemplar.

## Exemplar 6

~~I think that the main reason for~~  
*Frogs* contains some parody comedy as well as wigs and props this shows that even in costume design it was intended to be a comedic play. It also contains mythical animals such as singing frogs, showing that it ~~can't~~ can't have been a particularly serious play.

Not providing examples from the text limits the AO1 marks which can be given.

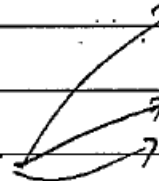
Most candidates were aware of how Aristophanes used the play to put forward his political views, and mentioned the *parabasis* even if they were not always familiar with its content. Criticism of politicians, was also frequently mentioned, even if names were not always given. Better answers also discussed the contest between Aeschylus and Euripides to see whom Dionysus was going to take back to Athens, and the inherent message of the choice of Aeschylus that Athens needed to return to the old values. Some, but not many, also mentioned the place of the play as part of a religious festival, and the poet's ambition to win first prize in the competition. Knowledge of the historical context of the play was useful in answering this part of the question.

An example of good practice in planning and concluding the essay can be seen in the exemplar below. All the examples seen in the plan were used in the essay.

Exemplar 7

|                          |                |                            |   |                |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|---|----------------|
|                          | <u>Plan</u>    | Laugh                      | Educate   | <del>...</del> |
|                          |                | • Statological             | • Political figures modified                                      |                |
|                          |                | "tunic" "brown"            | • Cleisthenes Bonlineages   |                |
|                          |                | • "Priest, save me"        | • Five per cent   |                |
|                          |                | • "Shift your pole around" | • Two obols   |                |
| put on plays, city saved |                | • "little yellow number"   | • Parabasis - "state wiped clean"                                 |                |
|                          |                | • Dionysus made foolish    | • Coinage   | • free slaves  |
|                          |                |                            | • "Noble and fall"  |                |
|                          |                |                            | • "Cheats and scoundrels"   |                |
|                          |                |                            | • "children have teachers to instruct them, young men have poets" |                |
|                          |                | lost Aristotle             | • "just about the only sensible thing"                            |                |
|                          | <u>Context</u> | less seriously             | • "that sea battle"   |                |
|                          |                | gods + hubris              | • "lost his little bottle"  |                |

why A is chosen



So overall, the Frogs has more function than causing laughter alone. Often, the moral message works in conjunction with laughter, such as in political satire, and literary jokes, but sometimes, there is no joke made. Another example of this is the attitude of Euripides and Aeschylus towards ~~the~~ the function of poetry, which functions not only as a criticism of tragedy, but also ~~is shown~~ as a metatextual ~~commentary~~ commentary on Frogs: they both agree on the didactic function of poetry, with Aeschylus saying that while "children have teachers to instruct them, young men have poets". This ~~also~~ shows how seriously tragedy was taken, that they would even be asked such a question, but it also shows the importance of comedy: not just to cause laughter, but to inspire, to teach, and to bring change, with a little bit of scatological humour along the way.

~~And~~ humour is less important than other purpose, such as in the parabasis

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