

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

H408

For first teaching in 2017

H408/21 Summer 2022 series

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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. A selection of candidate answers are also provided. 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 and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

Advance Information for Summer 2022 assessments

To support student revision, advance information was published about the focus of exams for Summer 2022 assessments. Advance information was available for most GCSE, AS and A Level subjects, Core Maths, FSMQ, and Cambridge Nationals Information Technologies. You can find more information on our [website](#).

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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 generally showed good knowledge of the content of the plays. They were able to express opinions about the questions and use evidence to back up these opinions. The responses showed the personal reaction of the candidates to the plays and the issues they raised. Candidates should be aware that the focus of their study should be the plays themselves, and their historical and cultural context. The material culture element should be studied as part of this context.

Finally, legibility and quality of written communication seems to have deteriorated since 2019 – perhaps this is another effect of Covid and online learning. This can particularly be seen in the spelling of names and technical terms. Candidates should be advised to read through what they have written to make sure that their work communicates their ideas clearly and effectively. Writing on alternate lines can sometimes make difficult handwriting easier to read.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should be reminded to:

- follow the instructions carefully
- start each 10-, 20- and 30- mark question on a new page of the answer booklet
- number questions carefully
- write clearly and legibly.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read the questions carefully • followed the rubric carefully • displayed good examination technique • used both literary and material culture evidence • provided quotations or close reference to the plays. • were aware of the historical and social context of the plays • addressed the question directly • came to a conclusion. • discussed the plays as pieces of drama, rather than as pure literature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • made little reference to the actual plays in the essay • made little or no reference to scholars in the essay • used information, which was not relevant to the question, e.g., discussed the Chorus in Tragedy in Question 7 • wrote lengthy introductions to some responses, including lower tariff questions • started a response to higher tariff questions with a foregone conclusion and then changed their mind over the course of their response, leading to a confusing argument • used technical terms such as peripeteia and anagnorisis without showing understanding what these mean.

Section A overview

Candidates generally showed good knowledge of the plot and details of the first half of Aristophanes' *Frogs*. In many cases, however, reference to the second half of the play was limited, or not shown. In general, candidates dealt well with the pot, but there was evidence that not all were familiar with the relevant background knowledge.

Question 1

1 What instrument is **Figure 1** playing on the pot in **Source A**?

[1]

Source A
Pot by the Gela Painter

Figure 1



Most candidates gave the correct answer, although some thought it was a lyre or pan pipes.

Assessment for learning



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- or two-word response. The same applies for Questions 3, 4 and 5.

Question 2

- 2 Analyse how useful the pot in **Source A** is in telling us about the origins and development of Greek comedy. [10]

Most candidates were able to make several points from the pot, especially concerning the use of costume, music, and dancing. Some responses commented only on what the pot shows without any knowledge of its provenance, which made it harder to address of the question of origins and development. Some candidates thought the pot was contemporary with Aristophanes, and many thought the pot was made in Southern Italy which lessened its usefulness. Those who knew the date commented on how it showed that animal Choruses were a part of comedy well before Aristophanes wrote *Birds*.

Many candidates were also able to discuss the origins of comedy in the dithyramb and the worship of Dionysus, as seen the vine motifs on the pot. More successful responses addressed both sides of the question, considering ideas such as the static nature of the image and our lack of knowledge as to what it actually depicts as reasons why it is less useful.

Assessment for learning



To answer this type of question, candidates should know when and where the pot was made.

Misconception



Many candidates assumed that the pot was illustrating Aristophanes' play *Birds*.

Exemplar 1

		<p>The source is also useful regarding the presence of an aulos player, which once more indicates that comedy originated as an art accompanied by music - and tells us about its musical origins as well as its theatrical origins. Given the later musicality of comic choruses it's therefore a useful source about how comedy developed from its origins into something involving singing as well as accompaniment.</p>
		<p>However, the source is limited in its usefulness. This vase from the late 6th Century only depicts a snapshot of a choral dance - it cannot show us a comparison with later</p>
		<p>than comic drama, nor can it tell us what stages comic theatre developed through. It cannot tell us when actors were added, nor by whom. It tells us nothing about the development of old comedy in terms of political satire. <i>Only</i></p>

Exemplar 1 is a good example of discussion of both how the pot is useful, making reference to the Source and explaining why it is useful, but also makes a few points about how it is not useful.

Question 3

3 Where does the scene in **Source B** take place? Make **two** points.

[2]

Source B**Aristophanes *Frogs* 221–250**

DIONYSUS	I am beginning to feel a pain – in the arse. <i>Co-ax, co-ax</i>	
CHORUS OF FROGS	<i>Bre-ke-ke-kex, co-ax, co-ax</i>	
DIONYSUS	But you probably don't care.	5
CHORUS OF FROGS	<i>Bre-ke-ke-kex, co-ax, co-ax.</i>	
DIONYSUS	To hell with your <i>co-ax</i> , You're nothing but <i>co-ax</i> .	
CHORUS OF FROGS	Mind your own business. What did you expect?	10
	I'm loved by the Muses, with their beautiful lyres, And by horn-footed Pan who plays on his pipe. Tuneful Apollo likes me, too: For the watery reeds, Which I grow in the marshes, Make bridges for his lyre.	15
	<i>Bre-ke-ke-kex, co-ax, co-ax.</i>	
DIONYSUS	But I've got blisters. My bum is wet And just about to poo.	20
	Something will pop out and say . . .	
CHORUS OF FROGS	<i>Bre-ke-ke-kex, co-ax, co-ax</i>	
DIONYSUS	Song-loving race, please stop!	
CHORUS OF FROGS	Oh no, we'll sing all the more, If ever in days of glorious sun We've jumped through the marsh grass And flowering rush, Taking delight in the leaping Strains of our song;	25
	Or away from the raindrops sent by Zeus We've sung and danced In the glimmering depths With a froggle-bubble-splash-dash.	30
	<i>Bre-ke-ke-kex, co-ax, co-ax.</i>	
DIONYSUS + FROGS		

Most candidates were able to make two accurate points, although some thought the scene took place in Charon's boat.

Question 4

4 In whose boat is Dionysus in the scene in **Source B**?

[1]

Most candidates gave the correct response to this question.

Question 5

5 Which god is Dionysus disguised as in **Source B**?

[1]

Virtually all of the responses were correct.

Question 6

6 'A successful piece of comic drama.'

Explain how far you agree with this description of the scene in **Source B**.

[10]

Candidates were generally able to pick out examples of humour from the passage and assess how they contributed to the success of the scene. Some responses gave an example and stated that it is funny without explaining why. A number of techniques were identified, such as scatological humour and parody, but the examples given were not always accurate (e.g., scatological humour refers to bodily functions, not use of 'naughty words'). Most responses also mentioned the portrayal of Dionysus as inept, even contrasting this presentation with that of the Bacchae, produced in the same year.

Many candidates commented on the how the scene may have looked, with Dionysus trying to row the boat (which may have been on the ekkyklema) and the costumes and actions of the Chorus jumping around him. Some also commented on the possibility of the Frog Chorus not actually being visible. Some also commented on the lyric element of the Frogs' song.

Most candidates commented on how various features of the scene made it a successful piece of comic drama. Higher-achieving responses dealt with the question in full, giving reasons why the scene is less successful, such as lack of political comment/slapstick comedy, and stating their opinion on the quotation in the question

Assessment for learning



Candidates should appreciate that the success of a piece of comic drama depends on more than just how funny a scene is. High achieving responses considered the audience's whole theatrical experience (not just what a reader reads).

Question 7*

7* 'The Chorus made no contribution to the success of a Greek comedy.'

Explain how far you agree with this statement. Justify your response.

You may use **Source(s) A and/or B** as a starting point in your answer.

[20]

Candidates generally showed good knowledge about the role and function of the Chorus in Greek comedy. These included their contribution to the humour of the play through their own words and actions, as well as their interaction with the other characters. Many candidates also noted their didactic function and mentioned the parabasis, although they were not always able to give details.

Many responses made use of either one or both of the sources on the exam paper. There were, however, some who only used the two sources and did not show knowledge of *Frogs* in particular, or of the general function of the Chorus in Greek comedy. However, there were also quite a few responses which discussed not only the two sources, but also mentioned other plays, especially *Birds*, *Wasps* and *Lysistrata*, as well as pots such as the *Basel Dancers* or the *Cheiron pot*.

Higher-achieving responses also discussed factors beyond how the Chorus contributed to the humour of the play. They mentioned the visual aspect of the Chorus' costumes and dancing, and also their singing. They also discussed the political aspects of the Chorus, including comments about politicians, and the parabasis with good details of its content. Only a few mentioned that the parabasis was the reason for *Frogs* being given an unprecedented second performance. Some candidates referred to secondary literature in their response, even though this is not a requirement to answer this question. Where scholars were referred to appropriately, credit was given.

Many candidates did not seem to know that there are two Choruses in *Frogs*. They often showed little or no knowledge about the second half of the play, and the role of the Chorus in the contest between Aeschylus and Dionysus.

Some responses lost their focus. Although a relevant approach to the question could be a brief mention of other factors that contributed to the success of a comedy, such as the relationship between Dionysus and Xanthias, too often this became the main focus of the response, with little or no discussion of the role of the Chorus. Sometimes also, the response became one about the role of the Chorus in Greek Theatre more generally, and concentrated on the Chorus in Greek tragedy, which was not relevant to the question.

Assessment for learning



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 responses.

Misconception



Some candidates judged the success of Greek comedy to be solely based on how funny it is, without considering other factors such as political comment, and the audio and visual elements.

Exemplar 2

	<p>however, the most important role of the chorus is delivering the parabasis, as suggested by the play 'Frogs' which was had the civic honour and was repeatedly performed due to the impact of parabasis. The parabasis is an important part of the play as it allows the chorus to break character and share the playwrights' views on contemporary issues.</p> <p>In Frogs, the parabasis is very political due to the part Peloponnesian war that was ongoing, Aristophanes mentions how Athenians should allow more citizens to become citizens if they fought in naval battles with them, such as the sea battle of Arginusae that is referenced multiple times. He also mentions his views on politicians and how such as Alcibiades, the audience of the play could then vote become influenced by the playwrights views and then change their votes, showing the influence of the parabasis on Athenian democracy.</p>
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Section B overview

Candidates generally showed good knowledge of the content of the Tragedies. They were able to express opinions about the questions and use evidence to back up these opinions. Higher-achieving responses used reference to scholars and secondary reading to back up their arguments, in many cases disagreeing with the scholar, or using conflicting scholarly views. At times, however, the use of scholarship in the essays felt shoehorned-in and was not always relevant. The most commonly cited scholars included Garvie, Goldhill, Wyles and Beard, as well as the introductions to the translations, both the Penguin and Cambridge editions. Some responses were driven by scholars' opinions, making it difficult to follow the candidate's own views on the question. Question 8 was more popular than Question 9, but Question 9 was answered marginally more successfully. Some candidates made a plan for their essay, which tended to help with the organisation of the response.

Question 8*

Use classical sources, and secondary sources, scholars and/or academic works to support your argument. You should also consider possible interpretations of sources by different audiences.

8* 'Oedipus was an arrogant tyrant who not only deserved his suffering, but made it worse.'

Explain how far you agree with this statement. Justify your response with close reference to Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*.

[30]

Candidates generally showed a sound knowledge of the play and were secure in the details. They were able to use close reference to the events in the play, as well as quotations, as evidence for their opinions. A number of responses fell into narrative, but still used references from different parts of the play in the context of their argument.

Candidates dealt with the various aspects of the question to varying degrees. They discussed Oedipus's arrogant behaviour with reference to him trying to avoid his fate by running away from Corinth and his certainty in his intelligence. Tyrannical behaviour was illustrated by his treatment of Creon, Tiresias and the shepherd. As a contrast, many candidates also commented on his benevolent rule of Thebes and his desire to save the city from the plague.

Responses on him deserving his suffering looked at both sides of the argument. Some claimed his violent nature and arrogance meant that he did deserve his suffering, while others argued that it was his fate, as revealed by the prophecies, so he did not deserve what happened to him. A few blamed his parents for his suffering.

Higher-achieving responses dealt well with Oedipus making his suffering worse. Candidates noted that while the prophecy had already been fulfilled before the play started, Oedipus could have lived on in blissful ignorance. It was his determination to discover the truth, firstly of Laius' death and then of his own origins, which led to his suffering. They also noted that Oedipus blinded himself and commented that it was his own fault, not Apollo's.

Misconception



A common misconception was that the prophecies given to Laius and Jocasta, and to Oedipus were identical. Laius and Jocasta were only told that their son would kill his father.

Exemplar 3

		<p>This self arrogance he has that he is able to overcome all issues makes him have a self right high regard of himself and so he ends up disrespecting both Tiresias and the prophetic messenger; when Tiresias comes from Delphi to to answer Oedipus' question as how to solve the problem of the plague, Tiresias refuses to give him any information and warns him that it is something he doesn't want to hear, however this causes Oedipus' explosive nature to erupt and his arrogance comes forth greeting as he begins to disrespect the prophet and slander both his</p>
		<p>name and reputation ('pious fraud'), he even attacks the prophet's blindness and mocks him for it. This is ironic as a part of his suffering towards the end is to painfully blind himself and so this arrogant mockery of Tiresias in a way circles back to him and so it could be argued that the self-inflicted pain onto his sight was deserved due to his arrogant attitude. However, I must disagree with the idea of it being his arrogance which exacerbated his suffering as I feel it is more his guilt, when Garcia says that his reaction to the truth is what forms a sense of 'catharsis' for Oedipus and I agree as once he sees what his own curiosity led to, such as the suicide of Jocasta, he goes into a 'maddened frenzy' after letting a 'wrenching sob' of lamentation out for Jocasta. He feels he has no right to see due to being blind to his own actions and so this guilt is what made his suffering worse.</p>

Exemplar 3 is a good example of how a candidate can integrate references to the play and quotations into the response, and discussion of the views of scholars into the general argument.

Question 9*

- 9* Explain how far you think the theme of the family is more important in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* than in Euripides' *Bacchae*. Justify your response with close reference to **both** plays. [30]

Candidates generally showed detailed knowledge of both plays, and of the relationships between the members of both families. In *Oedipus the King*, this included not only how Oedipus is related to the other members of his family (Laius, Jocasta, Creon and his daughters), but also many candidates broadened their argument to include how he treated his people ('my children') and acted as a surrogate father to the state. In *Bacchae*, although there was knowledge shown of the mother-son relationship of Agave and Pentheus, often there was some confusion over the relationships between Pentheus and Cadmus, and Pentheus and Dionysus.

Many candidates discussed how Oedipus clearly loved both Jocasta and his daughters, commenting on how he treated Jocasta almost as an equal when alive and his devastation at her death, and on his concern for how his daughters would now live and their prospects for getting married. Similarly, in *Bacchae*, the relationship between Cadmus and Pentheus was debated. At the beginning of the play, Pentheus mocks his grandfather for worshipping Dionysus, and at the end, Cadmus is lamenting how Pentheus had protected him and describing how he had gathered up the pieces of his body. Higher-achieving responses also included reference to how Dionysus came to Thebes to avenge the insult to his mother Semele.

Some candidates dealt with each play in turn, while others adopted a more thematic approach. There was generally good discussion of how the family relationship increased the horror in the plays, contrasting Oedipus' parricide and incest with Agave's murder of her own son, and how this increased the audience's pity for both of them, and the other characters in the plays.

Most candidates concluded that the theme of family was more important in *Oedipus the King* than in *Bacchae*. They argued that in *Bacchae*, Dionysus changes from wanting revenge for his mother to punishing the Thebans for not worshipping him, whereas in *Oedipus the King*, the theme of family was central to everything that happened in the play. However, a few candidates argued that an important factor in *Bacchae* is the end of the bloodline of Cadmus.

Misconception



Many candidates believed that Cadmus is the father of Pentheus.

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