

**A LEVEL**

**Examiners' report**

# **CLASSICAL CIVILISATION**

**H408**

For first teaching in 2017

**H408/11 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 is 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 11 series overview

Given the disjointed preparation the vast majority of students may have experienced when studying this module, their overall performance is an accolade to their determination as well as the commitment of their teachers.

The *Odyssey* once again proved to be slightly more popular than the *Iliad*, but the *Iliad* responses were again slightly better answered than those centred on the *Odyssey*.

Of the essays, Question 9 proved the most popular, but a significant number of students also tackled Questions 8 and 10.

Rubric errors were negligible. Very occasionally a candidate would attempt both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* context question.

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"> <li>demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the epics</li> <li>maintained the focus on the question at all times</li> <li>planned responses for extended pieces of writing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>did not plan their time successfully</li> <li>were unable to support their views with reference to the epics</li> <li>did not always explain why/how their chosen examples were relevant.</li> </ul>

### Assessment for learning



To help candidates gain valuable exam skills, regular practice in timed conditions would be beneficial.

## Section A overview

Candidates generally displayed good knowledge and understanding of *xenia* and its importance within the Homeric world and could select relevant sections of the passage for discussion.

Some candidates' marks were limited by a lack of analysis regarding how the evidence presented demonstrated good or bad *xenia*.

Others thought this question was solely about the analysis of language rather than the presentation of a theme, and answered accordingly.

Introductions are not necessary for 10-mark questions and this can save valuable time.

### Question 1

- 1 Explain how good hospitality (*xenia*) is demonstrated in **Passage A**.  
Use references to the passage to support your answer.

[10]

Most candidates were aware of the *xenia* sequence and were able to identify relevant examples from the passage. There was some sensitive work on Achilles not wanting to hurt his guest's feelings by ordering the body to be washed and anointed out of sight. Better responses went on to say that this was also Achilles' way of controlling his anger, and so not offending Zeus by harbouring ill-will towards the guest. The extension of *xenia* to include Priam's entourage was noted by some but curiously the provision of food was sometimes omitted. A small number of candidates wrote general responses about *xenia* with limited detail from the passage. It was enough to say Achilles was controlling his anger. To go into detail of the cause of that anger was less relevant and time-consuming.

### Question 2\*

- 2\* Explain how the importance of hospitality (*xenia*) is demonstrated in the *Iliad*. You may use **Passage A** as a starting point in your answer.

[20]

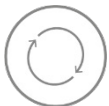
Many candidates chose to use the Achilles and Priam interaction seen in the passage as well as the Book 9 embassy scenes. Glaucus and Diomedes was often a third choice and was well explored and developed. Fewer candidates favoured Thetis with Hephaestus or Hector in Troy. Overall, relevant episodes were selected and good knowledge and understanding demonstrated. Marks for AO1 could be high, but candidates earned fewer marks for AO2 if they did not comment on the outcomes of the *xenia* episodes presented. The question asked for the 'importance' of *xenia* to be shown and there was not enough focus on this aspect of the task. It was not enough to say an act of *xenia* was good or bad, or 'positive' or 'negative'. The moral significance needed to be discussed. The fact that the war began due to broken *xenia*, so that *xenia* can be seen as driving the plot, is one example of what could have been achieved in just a few words.

## Exemplar 1

		<p>one way in which the importance of xenia is demonstrated in the Iliad is through the display of <del>its</del> reconciliatory or usability to precede 'menis' and depict the civilised nature of a hero. In Book 9, the embassy made up of Ajax, Odysseus and Phoenix visit Achilles in his hut. Even though, Achilles</p>
		<p>at this point is still nursing his anger at the <del>thought</del> loss of Briseis to Agamemnon, he still invites these Greeks in and commands Patroclus to serve them wine and a meal. The fact that Achilles can feel such strong emotion, which caused him to retreat from battle, and curse his own Greek army, and yet he still is hospitable to the same Greek army, depicts the high value of xenia. To the audience, Achilles demonstrates how he can remain civilised and calm, enhancing his status as a hero.</p>

Exemplar 1 is an extract from a response where the focus is clearly on the question – a good example of how to achieve both AO1 and AO2 marks.

### Assessment for learning



Centres would be well-advised to practice this type of exercise as part of their examination preparation: asking candidates to collect examples pertaining to a specific theme from throughout the epic, then analysing how important they are in the narrative.

### Question 3

- 3 Explain how bad hospitality (*xenia*) is demonstrated in **Passage B**.  
Use references to the passage to support your answer.

[10]

Many responses listed the terrible things done by the Cyclops but did not relate them to the *xenia* ritual of welcoming, feeding and making comfortable. Better responses explained how these examples demonstrated poor *xenia*. As for Question 1, there were many responses which were strong on AO1 and less so on AO2.

Few candidates identified Odysseus' lie as poor *xenia* or made reference to Odysseus' initial poor *xenia* in entering the Cyclops' cave. Some candidates referenced Polyphemus' questions regarding Odysseus' ship as poor *xenia*, but few noted that this was his attempt to eat more of the crew.

### Question 4\*

- 4\* Explain how the importance of hospitality (*xenia*) is demonstrated in the *Odyssey*.  
You may use **Passage B** as a starting point in your answer.

[20]

[Section A Total: 30]

Most candidates wrote about Polyphemus, the Phaeacians and the Suitors, and many mentioned Circe and Calypso. As with Question 2, AO1 marks were accessible but AO2 marks proved more elusive. Most candidates identified *xenia* as a marker of civilised behaviour and character, and commented well on the punishment of the Suitors. They found reward more challenging but there were some good responses to Telemachus being rewarded by his journey to discover himself, and some noted the reward given to Eumaeus. As with Question 2, the task called for the "importance" of *xenia* to be stressed, and where this was not done sufficiently AO2 was compromised.

#### Assessment for learning



Centres would be well-advised to practice this type of exercise as part of their examination preparation: asking candidates to collect examples pertaining to a specific theme from throughout the epic, then analysing how important they are in the narrative.

## Section B overview

Candidates' enjoyment of the epic was manifest and there was often some lively and interesting discussion, especially for Question 6. Awareness of the cultural context was also strong – particularly laudable, in view of the disrupted years this cohort has had to endure. Some candidates might have bolstered their responses by making closer reference to the text, especially the second half of Book 4.

There is no need for an introduction for the 10-mark question and references to scholars are not required at this stage. A desire to showcase one's knowledge is understandable, but this eats into valuable time and needs to be made relevant.

### Question 5

- 5 Explain how **Passage C** is a vivid piece of writing.  
Use references to the passage to support your answer.

[10]

Most candidates commented on the uses of metaphor, personification, simile and foreshadowing. Most were able to use the technical terms and make useful quotation. Many were less successful on explaining why references were vivid. Fewer candidates were able to identify and successfully comment on examples of vivid writing in the second half of the passage, although there were some interesting analyses of the references to the moon, stars and towers.

### Exemplar 2

		The simile comparing Dido to a wounded doe hit by an arrow without realising
		again makes passage C more vivid as the doe connotes innocence. This shows
		Dido's innocence, and how she didn't deserve the "misery and madness" she received.
		It also, again, shows how Dido doesn't realise what a dangerous position she is in,
		increasing sympathy for her, making the passage more vivid. The shepherd unwittingly represents
		Aeneas, he unknowingly hits her and leaves without realising the arrow will kill her, this
		both foreshadows Dido's death and makes Aeneas seem just as innocent and unknowing,
		again adding to the vividness of passage C as both characters don't see the consequences
		of their actions.

Often candidates are reluctant to 'unpick' the simile in a passage and instead just say that the use of the simile makes the scene vivid. Exemplar 2 is an example of what can be achieved.



**Assessment for learning**

To make sure they are securing AO2 marks, candidates should be practised in clearly explaining the effect of imagery in the context of the questions asked. They should also be encouraged to draw points from all parts of the passage.

**Question 6\***

**6\*** 'Admirable but unlikeable.'

Explain whether Dido deserves this description. You may use **Passage C** as a starting point in your answer. Justify your response. **[20]**

**[Section B Total: 30]**

There was plenty of material available for this question, but some candidates became distracted by a desire to explore the sympathy created for Dido rather than engaging with reasons why she might be deemed unlikeable. Most candidates could discuss the admirable achievements of Dido, recalling details of her tragic background and her portrayal in Book 1. Several identified the parallels to Aeneas, which thereby created admiration (including from the hero himself). Many commented on her treatment by the gods but did not sufficiently analyse this in the context of 'admirable but unlikeable'. Most candidates recalled her abandonment of her duties, as referenced in Passage C.

More successful responses then discussed her behaviour in Book 4, considering her initial resistance to the gods' interference as admirable, but her subsequent Bacchic raging and trickery of Anna as unlikeable. Few responses recalled Dido's curse on the Romans at her death, or the way in which she wishes she had murdered Ascanius and served him to his father. Some candidates made reference to her reappearance in Book 6 and there were valuable discussions regarding whether her final act of defiance could be viewed as 'admirable'. It was also pleasing to see how many candidates made reference to the Punic Wars and Cleopatra.

## Section C overview

As ever, essays generally benefited from better structuring if some form of initial planning had taken place. Centres are advised that candidates must approach this question comparatively: responses that looked for examples of sympathy in each passage, then attempted a comparison, scored less highly than responses that looked for points of comparison and discussed their relative sympathy. A significant number of candidates did not finish or even attempt Question 7.

It was good to see that centres have taught the importance of scholarly reference in the essay questions and that candidates were engaging with cited scholars, agreeing or disagreeing. Clearly, some candidates had profitably spent much time researching the works of various academics or listening to lectures. Others were well-versed with a list of relevant quotations on the various topics. Judicious use of scholars' views contributed to some good responses. Many candidates, however, used a quotation that was only tangentially related to what they were arguing and sometimes lost focus through trying to get the scholarship into their responses. Some made greater reference to scholars rather than to Homer and the *Odyssey*. Clearly, this is not a good approach. The emphasis in the examination needs to be on the ancient texts, not the modern scholarship.

### Misconception



It is not enough to say, "A scholar says...". Scholars need names in the examination.  
There is no expectation to include a reference to a scholar in every paragraph.

## Question 7

Answer **Question 7** with reference to **Passage C** and **either Passage A or B**.

- 7 Assess which passage you consider creates the greatest sympathy. You should refer to the passage from the *Aeneid* **and** the passage from the work of Homer you have read. **[10]**

Many candidates did not compare the two passages directly, instead providing a list of reasons why they felt sympathy in each separate passage, followed by a one-sentence conclusion. The most successful responses noted similarities between the two passages and used this as the springboard for a sustained comparative approach throughout.

Exemplar 3

		both passages feature a simile with
		passage A showing Achilles to be like a
		lion and passage C showing Bido
		to be like a wounded doe. whilst Bido is
		wounded to an animal of prey and this
		does evoke sympathy, the per audience
		of passage C would be able to empathise
		with Priam, a vulnerable old man, gang
		up against a feroceous leaping predator
		who is both unpredictable and deadly.

Exemplar 3 is an example of a paragraph where the candidate has successfully adopted a comparative approach.

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.

Either

Homer's *Iliad*

8\* 'Hero in name, human by nature.'

Explain whether you think Hector behaves in a more human way than heroic way in the *Iliad*. Justify your response.

[30]

This was the least popular of the three essays. Candidates had clearly explored the concept of a Homeric hero and features that were important to a hero, such as a desire for *kleos* and *time* etc. They generally did well in explaining heroic aspects of Hector, such as his refusal to stay with his family in Book 6 or his killing of Patroclus and the stripping of the body. Most could also interpret as heroic qualities his refusal to retreat in Book 22 and acceptance of his death.

Candidates found it harder to discuss Hector's human side. His fear in Book 22 was often cited, as was the scene when he removes his helmet in Book 6. Some candidates made good use of his treatment of Helen as evidence of his humanity. The most successful considered his refusal to retreat despite Polydamas' advice, and his fighting skills, as well as the fact he is considered the most threatening Trojan warrior. Few discussed the support of Apollo and Zeus and what this shows us regarding his heroic status.

## Question 9\*

### Homer's *Odyssey*

9\* 'Goddesses and women are the clever ones in the *Odyssey*, not Odysseus.'

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

[30]

There was plenty of material for this question, which perhaps tempted candidates to list things that women, goddesses and Odysseus did that were clever, without a focus on comparing them. Less successful responses tended to give a running commentary of clever behaviour. Most students discussed Athene, Penelope and Odysseus, with passing references to Circe. More successful responses considered Calypso's insightful comments to Hermes and Arete's perceptive questioning in Book 7.

One differentiator was the level of detail – for example Penelope's requesting of extra gifts from the Suitors and Odysseus' approval of this from the sidelines, or Odysseus' impressive raft building and rhetorical skills, and his impressive restraint when in the guise of a beggar at Ithaca.

The most successful responses considered who was truly the most clever: Odysseus managed to take vengeance on the Suitors and his disloyal maids, but this was due to Athene's gift of disguise and the assistance of Eurycleia. Similarly, Odysseus manages to get home, but only thanks to the assistance of several women along the way.

## Question 10\*

### Virgil's *Aeneid*

10\* 'The reader never feels optimistic when reading the *Aeneid*; the epic is completely depressing.'

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

[30]

[Section C Total: 40]

This question elicited some excellent responses, which considered how the characterisation of Aeneas develops during the epic and evaluated to what extent Aeneas was an admirable hero by the end of the epic.

Many candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the Augustan background of the epic and scenes that had contextual resonance such as the parade of heroes or the shield of Aeneas. The most successful candidates could identify the death of Marcellus as depressing, or the depiction of the Battle of Actium and the unrolling of the scrolls of fate as optimistic.

Most responses included reference to the downfall of Dido, war in Latium and the deaths of youth as depressing. Surprisingly few discussed the death of Turnus and how this affects our reading of the text.

Better responses considered the fall of Troy, particularly the deaths of Polites and Priam, and the scenes in the underworld, including discussion of the souls Aeneas encounters, as well as Anchises. Few considered the behaviour of the gods, although some candidates referred to Juno's hostility as a depressing factor.

As with all the essays, the most successful responses included scholarly thought, but then debated the extent to which they agreed with it to further their argument.

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