

Classical Civilisation

Advanced GCE A2 7816

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS 3816

Report on the Units

January 2008

3816/7816/MS/R/08J

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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Chief Examiner's Report

There was a significant increase in numbers for this session when compared to previous January sessions. Whilst there were a good many candidates who were trying to improve their scores/grades, there were also large numbers who were sitting the examination for the first time. Examiners felt that a large proportion of such candidates did not have sufficient maturity or experience to sit the examination after just one term's teaching. There were some solid performances on all papers but very few outstanding ones.. At the bottom end of the mark range there was an increase in the marks below 20.

Examiners expressed concern at the huge increase in the number of rubric errors and incomplete answers and/or papers. It seemed that timing was more of an issue in this session, with more time being spent on one question at the expense of the other. Candidates should be advised to use the mark allocation as a guide to making efficient use of their time. In general, the quality of written communication was no better or no worse than usual, but the spelling of Classical names and technical words was felt to be much weaker. Many candidates ignored the instructions about starting a new question on a new page. In fact, a significant number left no room at all between their answers for examiners to write a comment or a mark.

2736 Greek Epic

General Comments

As many students (apart from Year 13 re-sits) taking this module in January will have experienced only a few months of post-GCSE teaching, the demands of the paper gave them ample scope to display their textual knowledge and to apply it intelligently to the text in straightforward terms. Whilst the majority of candidates did manage to approach the questions sensibly and to show what they knew, there was a sense that some candidates underachieved. This was caused mostly by a lack of precise knowledge of the texts, with its inevitable knock-on effect on AO2 quality, and by the obviously limited opportunities for centres to train their students in the skills of advanced level context and essay writing in a few months only.

A1 and B3 proved the most popular choices; a moderate proportion attempted A2 but few approached the apparently straightforward B4, perhaps lured by the personal choice of AO1 offered by B3.

AO3 quality seemed average rather than notably poor; although the comma is still used prolifically instead of the full stop, there was a substantial proportion of legible, well-written and well-punctuated scripts. The misspelling of names (notably 'Posieden' and 'Ithica') and words used in the actual questions in front of the candidates (especially 'received' and 'vengeance') was inexcusably frequent.

There seemed to be a number who were obviously short of time. In many cases the essay mark was considerably less than the context mark. This was often caused by an overextended (a) section or in context A2, an overextended (c) section.

There was a significant number of rubric errors, usually where candidates did two context questions. Given that many AS students are only four school months out of year 11, centres do need to spell out to them repeatedly what they are supposed to do when confronted by the AS paper.

Comments on Individual Questions

- A1 (a)** As always, successful responses to this question required the candidate to read the wording carefully in order to assess the precise AO1 demands. This year, because both A1 and A2 (a) questions involved Odysseus' journey, a far higher proportion of candidates than usual severely disadvantaged themselves in both A1 and A2 by completely confusing the order of the travels thereby receiving very low marks or none at all. Most candidates who correctly identified the required starting point here did include at least the main details of the Aeolus story; not all, however, added enough detail for the higher bands, for example, the fact that the bag of winds contained all those which would hinder the hero's voyage to Ithaca. The most frequent omission of detail occurred in the final section where the separate mooring of Odysseus and his other ships was often omitted. Many thought that the hero himself went reconnoitring with his men. Once again, centres should remind candidates that for the (a) question, direct quotation from the passage and added critical commentary are superfluous and add no marks.
- (b)** This was a typical AS question which produced some fine responses. Most correctly identified the aspects of the story which defined it as, 'exciting': the size and number of the Laestrygonians, the suddenness of their attack, the helplessness of Odysseus' men, the havoc wreaked on them and their ships and, finally, the urgency of Odysseus' own escape. Better answers not only correctly identified the literary

techniques used to create the excitement but also explained exactly how they produced that excitement; it is not enough merely to identify the simile (rarely correctly spelt), 'like fishes on a spear' as exciting, without also commenting in detail upon the relevant points of comparison: great numbers of helpless victims and large, predatory attackers. Many ran out of steam (or time) before the end of the passage and failed to identify the urgent tone of Odysseus' escape and the sudden, bald summary of events in the final two sentences. Some might have benefited from a deeper knowledge of stylistic features - the not uncommon observation that Homer creates excitement by, '... using a lot of commas ...' rather missed the point.

- (c) This was intended as a general question on the *xenia* experienced by Odysseus in the passage compared and contrasted with that experienced elsewhere on his travels. Those who approached the AO1 comprehensively, identified the obvious infringements of *xenia* by the (often misspelt) Laestrygonians and immediately compared it with the Cyclops narrative. Better candidates saw contrasts between the two in the lack of any interaction before the Laestrygonian attack and the planned intelligence of Odysseus' escape from Polyphemus. Mixed receptions such as that by Circe and Aeolus were well identified in better answers. Most, but, surprisingly, not all, highlighted the sumptuous *xenia* in Phaeacia; many, however deprived themselves of higher AO1 marks by failing to give specific detail of the various aspects of the royal hospitality.

Many candidates would have improved on their AO2 marks by a closer discussion of data focussing on, 'typical' (or not); in many cases, the direction of the argument became lost in a plethora of AO1 illustrating either *xenia* or the character of Odysseus.

There was a proportion of candidates, perhaps confusing, 'received' and, 'perceived', who directed their arguments towards the character and leadership skills of Odysseus; credit was given where due, provided that the definition of, 'received' was explicitly or implicitly obvious.

- A2 (a) There were many competent answers dealing proportionately with Odysseus' encounters with the Sirens and Scylla and Charybdis, then his time on Thrinacie. A few paid too little attention to the words, 'approached the Sirens' and began their narrative after, rather than at the start of the Sirens episode. Students are well advised always briefly to describe Scylla and Charybdis in an answer rather than assume the examiner knows that they know. Accounts of events on Thrinacie were usually efficient and accurate, the level of detail being the discriminating factor; candidates do, however, need reminding to take the AO1 recounted right to the beginning of the passage; many omitted the Sun's discovery of the deed and his approach to Zeus.
- (b) As with A1(a), the best responses made use of the whole passage, illustrating their points by precise quotation of or allusion to the text. Many were more patchy in their use of the passage and therefore limited themselves in terms of both AO1 and AO2 assessment. Whilst the Sun's desire for vengeance was rarely missed, his petulant tone, touching love of his cattle and blackmail threats were less universally identified. The power and authority of Zeus seemed sometimes to be so obvious to candidates that textual proof was omitted except in the most general terms. Many candidates did, however, appreciate what most saw as gossiping between the deities. As with A1(b), many failed to find material for comment in the second half of the passage, despite overt references to the gods sending ominous portents and Zeus bringing the seventh day.

- (c) This question usually produced averagely competent answers, even though a few over-generously interpreted "immortals" as including even the Cyclops and Scylla and Charybdis. A recommended approach to such a question would be to use the passage as a springboard from which to widen discussion to the rest of the epic. In dealing with the gods, it is perhaps also advisable to treat the Olympian deities before the demi-goddesses and minor deities such as Calypso, Circe and Ino. Those who did deal with Zeus saw him most often in his relations with Odysseus; only better answers dealt with his universal role as dispenser of justice and upholder of the moral code of *xenia*. Poseidon and his reasons for anger were rarely omitted; less common were precise details of the storms he caused and his reason for finally withdrawing. Those who knew their texts were eloquent on Calypso and Circe. What was often lacking was a focus on the degree of importance of the gods; this was often relegated to a few lines at the end of the answer, thereby much limiting the AO2 mark.
- B3** Many more candidates chose this essay in preference to B4. The greatest danger of such an open-ended question was the potential to deal with the text in a shallow, broad brush way. The question did focus attention on the Suitors, who should, therefore have been given more than the half page treatment they were often afforded; this suggested that many candidates were much less secure in their knowledge of the second half of the epic. Many only dealt with the Suitors either before or after Odysseus' return to Ithaca; only the best responses managed to combine apt data on the two, seeing the Suitors' emotional threat to Odysseus' kingdom, wife and son as well as their physical threat to his life. Not many differentiated between the Suitors. Since the question did specify, '... at least two other threats', candidates would have done well to focus on another two (or three) rather than to give four or five line references to many other possible threats throughout the whole epic. The best responses selected varied threats and, within each threat, broke the material down into apt AO1 areas, the most popular being women/temptation (comprising usually Calypso, Circe and Nausicaa), the gods (Zeus, Poseidon, Calypso, Circe), his own men (the bag of winds, the Sun's cattle and in better answers, the Cicones and Eurylochus' confrontations with the hero), and himself (desire for *kleos* especially in the Cyclops episode and perceived failures in leadership). What was often lacking was direct comparison and assessment of the relative power of these threats and a clear final conclusion. Too many evaded a decision by finding all threats great in some way. If there was a most popular threat, it was that of Odysseus' own character.
- B4** Few attempted this question. Those who did often produced competent answers of varying depth and detail. Key words here were, "Mortal" and 'surprising'; answers did usually focus on the expected women: Penelope, Nausicaa and Arete, Helen and in better answers, Eurycleia and the maids in Ithaca but did not always set a foundation by explaining the usual restrictions upon women of that era. The depth of treatment given to Penelope varied; some were very general whilst others cited much more specific data to support their arguments, such as her rebuking the minstrel and being corrected by Telemachus. As with other answers on the paper, data was rarely used from the whole spread of the epic, again suggesting a limited knowledge of the whole. Nausicaa, Arete and Helen were often well treated with apt AO1; Eurycleia, included in better responses was variously seen, depending often, again, on the candidates' knowledge of the text. The importance of reaching a conclusion should again be stressed; sometimes there seemed to be such a desire to produce apt AO1 that the need for discussion, argument and conclusion fell by the wayside.

2740 Greek Tragedy 1

General Comments

There was a larger than usual entry for Greek Tragedy in the January 2008 examination session. Numbers were equally divided between the two modules. Candidates generally had a good knowledge of the plays, but were not always able to use this knowledge appropriately in their answers. There was an increase in the number of rubric errors, with quite a few candidates answering two context questions. Spelling, especially of names and technical terms, continued to be a problem. There was also a continuing confusion between *Empathy* and *Sympathy*.

Comments on Individual Questions

The two more popular questions were A2 (*Oedipus the King*) and B3 (*Electra*).

- A1 (a)** Candidates generally had a sound knowledge of the events in the play for Part (a), although they did not always mention all the events. Cassandra's prophecies were the most common omission.
- (b)** In part (b), the analysis of the passage was sound, discussing the attitude of the Chorus as mourning their king and condemning Clytemnestra. Reference to the rest of the play was patchy, with most candidates able to state that the Chorus generally supported Agamemnon, but without supporting evidence. Better answers mentioned their doubts about Iphigenia's sacrifice.
- (c)** Part (c) tended to produce a variety of answers, with candidates able to analyse the role of the Chorus as narrator, participant and commentator, but in many cases, evidence from the play was lacking.
- A2 (a)** Candidates were less secure on details than in A1. Many answers did not mention the events which occurred between Jocasta leaving the stage, and Oedipus rushing into the palace. Many candidates also forgot that the death of Jocasta and Oedipus' blinding happened off stage, and were reported by a messenger.
- (b)** Part (b) produced good analyses of the passage as a piece of dramatic writing, but all too often, candidates did not make their analysis relevant to the passage as the ending to the play.
- (c)** Part (c) produced sound and interesting views on the passage, with opinions varying between Creon being sympathetic to Oedipus, and being sarcastic and wanting to throw him out of Thebes. However, once again, use of the rest of the play varied. Many candidates only discussed one of the two scenes featuring Oedipus and Creon in their answer.
- B3** Opinions about *Electra* as a tragedy varied considerably. Candidates were generally split equally about it being a tragedy. Definitions varied, with many answers using Aristotle as the basis of their answer, although any sensible definition was accepted. Some answers simply concentrated on characterisation, especially Electra's, while others looked at dramatic conventions. Surprisingly few answers discussed the ending. Many of those that did confused the myth with the play, considering it to be a tragedy because of the suffering to be endured by Orestes from the Furies after the play ends, something not mentioned by Sophocles.
- B4** Not a popular question, which produced a full range of answers. Many candidates found it difficult to define what a moral message was, or to identify a message in their chosen plays. Those who managed to do this produced some very interesting answers. Moral messages discussed included revenge in *Agamemnon* and *Electra*, fate in *Agamemnon* and *Oedipus the King*, and pride in *Agamemnon* and *Oedipus the King*.

2741 Greek Tragedy 2

The most popular combination of answers was A1 (*Medea*) and B3 (*Bacchaë*)

- A1** (a) Most candidates had a sound knowledge of events in the play, although often the role of the Tutor was not mentioned, and the deaths of Creon and Glauce were treated as happening on the stage, without the messenger's speech.
- (b) The passage was generally well analysed in Part (b), but quite a few candidates neglected to make their comments relevant to the passage as the ending to the play.
- (c) In Part (c), candidates used the passage well, but did not always bring in all the relevant material from the rest of the play, not mentioning either the first confrontation between Jason and Medea, or their second meeting.
- A2** (a) Knowledge of events in the play was generally good, although many treated it as a story rather than a play. The entry of Hippolytus was often ignored.
- (b) Part (b) produced some good answers, with better candidates remembering the significance of the context and the visual impact.
- (c) In Part (c), most candidates mentioned the basic points of the Nurse's role. Better answers considered her role in highlighting Phaedra's character, but all too many answers neglected the fact that she made Hippolytus swear an oath of silence, and the consequences this had.
- B3** The answers to this question produced an impressive standard of detailed knowledge. However, a large number of candidates found it hard to focus on the demands of the question, concentrating on whether Pentheus deserved his fate, with little reference to sympathy. Many answers read like pre-prepared essays. Better answers were able to discuss Pentheus' motives for his actions, sympathising with his plight, or to conclude that, despite the fact that he deserved his fate, it was still possible to feel sympathy for him.
- B4** Not a popular question. Most answers discussed the role of the Chorus in general, as narrators or commentators, without considering the actual function of the Chorus in each specific play. Detail from the plays was often lacking as the basis of the answers. There were some good answers, analysing the relationship of the Chorus with Medea, Phaedra and Dionysus in their respective plays. Candidates were also able to discuss their lack of persuading Medea to abandon her plans to kill her children, or in *Hippolytus*, their failure to persuade Theseus not to curse his son.

2746 Greek Comedy 1

General Comments

It was encouraging that most candidates were able to demonstrate knowledge of the content and the dramatic conventions of the three plays. Differentiation was achieved, as usual, by rewarding those candidates who utilised the appropriate knowledge to answer the precise question asked. There was evidence that teachers are drawing their students' attention to the parallels with modern forms of comedy. Sadly, some candidates could not resist peppering their answers with references to television programmes, however unconnected to the question and often at the expense of any citation from Aristophanes' work.

There were more responses to A1 than to A2; B3 and B4 attracted approximately equal numbers. Poor spelling of words such as Archarnians, Euripedes and humourous remain ubiquitous.

Comments on Individual Questions

- A1 (a)** Most candidates were able to give the core details. More rarely seen were such items as the girls' enclosure in a sack, the specific pig appendages they were given and the arrival and subsequent despatch of an informer.
- (b)** Those candidates on autopilot answering the standard 'humour in the passage' question did not deal with the 'unrealistic/unexpected' slant and thus failed to gain some AO2 marks. A rather surprising omission from most answers was any reference to the exotic reaction to the eel. On the other hand, the Informer was usually dealt with successfully.
- (c)** Candidates were usually able to list Dikaiopolis' activities and achievements but often failed to discuss whether he had had it easy or not. For example, most asserted that Amphitheus went to get the peace treaties from Sparta for him but not all went on to make the simple point that this was an easy way for him to achieve what he wanted. Rather surprisingly, the details of Dikaiopolis' manipulation of the Acharnians were frequently neglected. The candidate who claimed that he spoke to them with his 'head on a bloke' was a little wide of the mark.
- A2 (a)** Most answers contained some reference to a mortar and pestle, and to foodstuffs representing locations (Sicilian cheese being the best remembered). Havoc usually got a mention but only two candidates recalled that, as he arrives, he is boxed on the ears by War. A creditable number were able to link the absence of a pestle in Athens and then Sparta to the deaths of Cleon and Brasidas.
- (b)** The dancing of the Chorus naturally dominated most answers here and provided a respectable number of AO1 and AO2 marks for those who commented on the action on stage as well as what was being said. Many failed to analyse Trygaeus' reaction (exasperation?). Some thought Cerberus was a recently deceased Athenian politician. Virtually everyone honed in on farting!
- (c)** The Examiners were generous in their interpretation of leadership, and gave credit for mention of any of Trygaeus' achievements. Most candidates, encouragingly, remembered to comment on the passage but those who claimed that it showed evidence of good leadership failed to convince. There was considerable haziness about Trygaeus' role in helping to pull out the statue, and often little reference to any part of the play after that event.

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- B3** A few candidates took this question to mean a discussion of the merits of watching a production of the play as opposed to reading 'the book'. Of those who adopted a more orthodox reading, the least successful were those who merely catalogued the strong visual elements. Far more successful were those who linked the spectacle with the accompanying dialogue (the smartening-up of Procleon/Philocleon at the beginning of Act 2 is a good example) and then went on to show how this combination reinforced the themes and messages of the play.
- B4** Here, good answers were able to give evidence of where a lack of knowledge of ancient Athens was a handicap to enjoying the plays, at both the macro level (the court system, the deprivations of war, the functioning of the Assembly etc.) and at the micro level (Cleonymus' dropped shield, Euripides' greengrocer mother etc.). They balanced these with a wide range of evidence of slapstick humour, other visual effects and the more universal sorts of jokes. Weaker answers usually produced some argument but failed to support it with detailed evidence.

2747 Greek Art and Architecture 1

General Comments

There were over 200 candidates taking this paper for the first time. This meant that the performance of candidates in this session was rather different from that of candidates in the summer session and previous January sessions, although the outcomes were very much in line with January 2007.

There were fewer very weak papers than in previous January sessions, but there were some scores below 10. There were also fewer papers which scored very high marks. In general, the level of performance could be described as competent and the level of knowledge and understanding was satisfactory, though there were several misconceptions about different elements of temples, architectural elements and sanctuaries.

Timing seemed to be a big issue for some candidates; there were examples of questions being omitted (usually (b) or (c) from the context questions) and excessively long context questions, leading to essays of less than 1 side. A number of candidates chose to tackle the essay first and then do the context in order of marks available. This proved to be successful tactic for only a minority of those who attempted it.

Comments on Individual Questions

In section A the question on the sanctuary of Delphi proved to be the most popular of the context questions, though the vase-painting question was often answered more effectively.

A1 (a) Identification of the Francois vase.

The type of pot, its use and the painter were correctly identified by the majority of candidates who attempted this question. The potter and the date often proved more elusive. Francois was a popular choice both for the painter and potter.

(b) Content and composition of frieze in figure B.

Even when candidates gave the correct answers in A1(a), there was no guarantee that they knew what was happening in the frieze depicted in Figure B. Herakles chasing Perseus, the Wedding of Perseus and Medusa, and various scenes involving Achilles were popular answers. Just over half of the candidates could correctly identify the scene as Achilles' pursuit of Troilos – but even here there was a good deal of story-telling rather than reference to what was depicted in the scene. Some candidates were able to comment on the whole scene from left to right but others could only discuss the central figures. There were several candidates who tried to compare Figure A and Figure B without showing any awareness that Figure B came from the pot depicted in Figure A.

(c) Discuss whether Kleitias was a master storyteller.

There were some fine responses to the question about Kleitias being a master storyteller, with detailed reference to other friezes from the Francois vase and some comparison to Sophilos or the Gorgon Painter. There were, of course, those who ignored the instruction not to make extensive use of the Troilos frieze. A small number of candidates simply left out this question.

A2 (a) Identification of the sanctuary at Delphi.

Although this question was more popular than the vase-painting question, the identification questions proved more challenging with all three of the major sanctuaries being named or combined in some way (eg the sanctuary of Delphi in Bassai). For those who correctly identified the sanctuary questions (i) - (iv) presented no difficulty. The identification of the three structures was a little more demanding for some, especially the Lesche of the Knidians.

(b) Design of temple of Apollo and how the architect overcame problems.

There were some thoughtful responses to the problems and solutions faced by the architect when building the temple of Apollo. As usual in architecture questions, the responses tended to be rather too brief and lacking in detail.

(c) Development of the sanctuary.

The question on the development of the site was not well answered because many candidates assumed the buildings of the sanctuary had been built at the same time. Those who had an appreciation of the history of the site and how it was used were able to offer some sensible comments about the development and why particular buildings were placed as they were. Again, some candidates chose to leave out this question. For those who misidentified the site in A1(a), consequential error was applied, but this often resulted in very low marks because the candidates produced reference to some kind of hybrid sanctuary which was a mixture of various elements of Delphi, Olympia and the Athenian Acropolis.

In section B the architecture question proved to be the most popular, though not by the same margin as in the context questions.

B3 What opportunities and challenges did the subject of the Trojan war offer to vase painters?

There were some knowledgeable and well-organised answers which drew on a wide range of examples from the Trojan War cycle. The most impressive answers tackled the question and appreciated what a challenge might involve and also tried to offer suggestions as to why the Trojan War was such a popular topic for vase painters. Some answers gained high AO1 marks for their detailed use of specific pots but low AO2 marks for their failure to address the question.

B4 What were the advantages gained by architects from combining the Doric and Ionic orders in Greek architecture?

The quality of the responses to this question was very variable. Many candidates clearly had a good knowledge of the Doric and Ionic orders and spent a good deal of their essays focusing on the differences between the two. Often they went on to describe buildings which were purely Doric or purely Ionic. Such an approach can gain some credit under AO1 but not under AO2 because the question has not been addressed. Some are still convinced that the Erechtheum employs a mixture of the Doric and Ionic orders. There was confusion too, concerning the Parthenon, with some believing that all the internal columns were Ionic and others that the exterior columns were alternately Doric and Ionic. Those who appreciated both the decorative effects and the practical/functional elements of combining the two orders produced very good essays. Knowledge of the temple of Apollo at Bassai was often impressive.

Examiners were rather taken with one candidate's assessment of the orders – comparing Doric to a pint of Guinness and Ionic to a glass of Pinot Grigot!

Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE Classical Civilisation (3816, 7816)
January 2008 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
2736	Raw	100	77	68	59	50	41	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2740	Raw	100	77	68	60	52	44	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2741	Raw	100	77	68	60	52	44	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2746	Raw	100	73	65	57	50	43	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2747	Raw	100	70	62	54	47	40	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (ie after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
3816	300	240	210	180	150	120	0
7816	600	480	420	360	300	240	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
3816	14.9	46.3	74.6	91.0	100	100	67
7816	12.5	25.0	87.5	100	100	100	8

75 candidates aggregated this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:

http://www.ocr.org.uk/learners/ums_results.html

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