

Classical Civilisation

Advanced GCE A2 7816

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS 3816

Report on the Units

January 2009

3816/7816/MS/R/09J

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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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2736 Greek Epic

General Comments

The paper offered all students a fair opportunity to show knowledge of the text and an ability to analyse and construct well-balanced arguments to prove a case. Those candidates at every level of attainment who had made some effort to prepare for the examination succeeded in showing a competent knowledge of the main aspects of the text and, within the capabilities of each candidate, an effort to answer questions aptly and to use that knowledge; there were inevitably some whose preparation appeared sketchy or non-existent. Centres presenting Year 12 students had, for the most part, prepared them well in knowledge of the rubrics and there were very few who failed to follow instructions on which questions to answer.

The attraction of the Cyclops narrative and an Odysseus-based essay made A1 and B3 the most popular choices; whilst very few attempted A2, there were some who went for the broader approach of B4.

AO3 quality, as ever, showed a wide range of ability; the average student still seems occasionally hazy about punctuation and the spelling of obvious and common names in *The Odyssey* (including that of the hero).

Comments on Individual Questions

- A1** (a) Whilst most successfully identified the right area of narrative required, a few did misunderstand, 'since' and narrated events before, rather than after, Odysseus arrived at the cave. Most identified the key aspects but did not always supply enough detail to earn higher band marks; on the wait for the Cyclops' return, for example, some merely said that the men waited, others detailed what was in the cave and the contrasting wishes of Odysseus and his men. There was at times some confusion of the order of events, especially relating to the position of the 'Nobody' dialogue and the point at which Odysseus and his men sharpened the stake to be used later. A few, probably over-influenced by film versions of the epic (the narrative accuracy of which is not always to be trusted) portrayed the men as singing to Polyphemus as he drank.
- (b) This was a typical AS question which produced some well analysed responses. Most correctly identified the aspects of the story which defined it as 'exciting': the detail of the method used, the descriptive focus on the eye, and the danger of the giant Cyclops, even when blinded and drunk. It is important for higher bands not only to identify the literary techniques used to create the excitement but also to explain exactly how that excitement is produced. It is not enough merely to identify a simile, without also commenting in detail upon the relevant points of comparison, such as the twisting motion of the stake as it entered the eye and the teamwork involved in pushing it. Identification of stylistic features was much hazier than usual, especially in confusion of simile and metaphor and what constitutes an adjective (certainly not 'seizing' and 'twist!'). Omission of stylistic terms is perhaps preferable to misidentification. Most did identify key aspects of the passage and quoted aptly; differentiation arose from the detail with which the text was used and the ability to explain exactly how the stylistic features chosen made the incident exciting. A few students merely wrote a generalised critical analysis of the passage without once using the word, 'exciting'.

- (c) This question required a review of the passage and wider text which considered both sides of the statement. Many answers failed completely to discuss possible events where the statement was not true. The obvious point to begin was the passage: most, though not all, correctly identified the reasons for the Cyclops' punishment with a link to the virtue of *xenia* upheld by Zeus. Surprisingly, a significant proportion of those who felt that he deserved worse failed to point out that Odysseus' own predicament, trapped in the cave, made the option of killing the Cyclops impossible. Outside the passage, the obvious incidents, (Odysseus' punishment from Poseidon, his men's punishment for killing the Sun God's cattle, the death of the Suitors and the punishment of members of Odysseus' household) were discussed in varying depth; better answers saw more than one side to the events, such as the killing of the better Suitors like Amphinomus. The obvious harshness of Poseidon turning the Phaeacian ship to stone was often forgotten. There was a tendency with some candidates to see any death or setback (Elpenor's death in Aeaëa) as a punishment without discrimination.
- A2**
- (a) The accuracy of the AO1 data in this question depended totally on candidates recognising exactly when the fake wedding feast occurred. Once candidates had done this, most correctly surveyed events in reasonable detail, especially the conversation leading to the recognition. The second half of the content in the mark scheme was often less well covered and the conversation between Odysseus and Penelope was sometimes omitted.
- (b) The key to a successful answer here was to identify correctly the aspects of the passage conveying peace, then those conveying prosperity. A number of candidates either blurred the identification or completely omitted one aspect or the other, usually the second. As always, the best responses used the whole passage, illustrating their points by precise reference to the text. There were sensitive reviews of the peace in the couple's conversation and in Odysseus's deep, relaxed sleep. Better answers quoted specifically rather than reproducing a run of lines.
- (c) The obvious approach to this type of question is to use the passage as a springboard from which to widen discussion to Odysseus's relationships with women in the rest of the epic. The best answers dealt both with the hero and with the various women he meets and differentiated between types of love, such as the possessive, unwanted love of Calypso for Odysseus, the magical hedonistic life with Circe, the motherly love of Eurycleia for her master and the deep union with Penelope. A number read far more into the relationship between Odysseus and Nausicaa than the text could possibly merit.
- B3** This was a popular question which was generally approached soundly. Most concluded that Odysseus was a wanderer but that most of his travels did have a purpose, chiefly to return to his kingdom and wife and also to gain *kleos* on his journey home as befits a hero and king. Even weaker candidates often used the main incidents detailed in the mark scheme as evidence for their argument. Better answers used these incidents to argue in greater depth both for and against the case, for example, Odysseus' desire to save his men singlehandedly on Aeaëa suggests a desire to return home, whilst his year long stay there and the fact that his men had to urge him to leave suggests the opposite. Some castigated him for delaying (as they saw it) to plunder the Cicones, whereas others used the incident to introduce the hero's urge for fame and fortune.

- B4** This title was a less popular option. Those who did choose it all produced apt arguments in varying levels of detail and scope. As always, the danger of a superficial sweep over the whole epic misled some into a very generalised approach; others, however did suggest various reasons for the epic's appeal and adduced appropriate and detailed AO1 in support. The most frequent reasons given were the emotional appeal of the family situation in Ithaca, the excitement and interest given by the element of fantasy in both locations and monsters, the attractiveness of an adventurous hero, the moral element of evil being punished, the gods and the variety of storytelling techniques. There was a noticeable attempt to make a case and reach a conclusion at the end (rather than the beginning) of the essay.

2740 Greek Tragedy 1

General Comments

In the January session, 2741 (Euripides) had marginally more candidates than 2740 (Aeschylus and Sophocles). Problems seen in previous examination sessions continued to appear, most commonly in the spellings of proper names (Euripides and Laius were, as usual, often misspelt as were Agave, and Dionysus) and other common words such as the various forms of prophesy. There continues to be confusion over the difference between sympathy and empathy, and the use of revenge and avenge. Misuse of technical terms, such as *stichomythia* and *anagnoresis* is still a problem for many candidates. The majority of candidates had a good knowledge of the plays studied, and were able to express a personal opinion about the themes discussed in the questions.

A1, from *Agamemnon*, and A2, from *Electra* were equally popular as context questions, while B3, the essay on Oedipus as an arrogant tyrant who not only deserved his fate, but made it worse produced more answers than B4, the question about the portrayal of Clytemnestra in *Agamemnon* and *Electra*. Some candidates still treated *Agamemnon* and *Electra* as if they were part of a series. Candidates also still showed a certain amount of confusion over the prophecies in *Oedipus the King*.

Comments on Individual Questions

- A1**
- (a) Candidates were generally confident in the main details of the events leading up to the scene in Part (a), but the amount of detail varied. Many omitted the reasons for Clytemnestra's entry on stage, and the role of the Herald was frequently not mentioned.
 - (b) Part (b) gave the candidates plenty of material to work with. Virtually all were able to find examples of Aeschylus' use of dramatic irony, but were not always able to analyse why this was effective, being limited to listing examples. Sometimes only a few examples were mentioned. Many candidates failed to mention the tapestries.
 - (c) Clytemnestra's view of Agamemnon in Part (c) produced a variety of answers. Many candidates did not go beyond the passage, while better answers discussed the differences in her expressed views in the passage and earlier in the play, as compared to her speech after murdering Agamemnon. Many answers did not discuss Clytemnestra gloating over Agamemnon's body, while a surprisingly large number of candidates seemed to think that her views in the passage were a genuine expression of affection.
- A2**
- (a) Candidates were generally less secure on the details in *Electra*. Not all answers included the dream of Clytemnestra and her libations, and there was some confusion over the reporting of Orestes' death. Some candidates thought that the urn had already been brought in.
 - (b) Part (b) on the dramatic effectiveness of the passage, produced a range of answers. Most candidates were able to find examples from the passage, but effectiveness was once again a problem in many answers.

- (c) The relationship between Electra and Chrysothemis produced varying degrees of detail. Common areas which were neglected were the argument between Electra and Chrysothemis over Clytemnestra's libations, and Chrysothemis' reaction to Electra's proposal for vengeance. In general, most candidates were able to discuss the antagonism between the sisters. Better answers were able to see both sides of the story, especially Chrysothemis' love and concern for Electra.
- B3** This essay was tackled by a large number of candidates. Those who did find plenty to say about Oedipus' behaviour, discussing both tyrannical aspects of his actions, and how he behaves as a good king. However, the second part of the question was all too often neglected. Candidates tended to concentrate on Oedipus as a tyrant, and did not discuss whether he deserved his fate and made it worse. Better answers did mention both how he cursed the killer of Laius, and his self-blinding at the end of the play, neither of which was part of the prophecy he received from the oracle at Delphi. Many candidates did consider whether Oedipus could have altered his fate. There was still confusion over the prophecies given to Laius, and to Oedipus.
- B4** This was the less popular of the essay questions. Most candidates had a good knowledge of the plays, but many found themselves drawn into narrative, simply stating the part played by Clytemnestra in each play. They were unable to show discrimination in the material they chose. The part played in *Agamemnon* provided more material, and, unsurprisingly, was discussed in more detail. Most candidates chose her portrayal in *Agamemnon* as being more effective, mainly because of her dominance of the action, but some found her role in *Electra* more effective because they considered her to be more realistic and varied in her emotions, as compared to Aeschylus' "one-dimensional" character.

2741 Greek Tragedy 2

General Comments

In the January session, 2741 (Euripides) had marginally more candidates than 2740 (Aeschylus and Sophocles). Problems seen in previous examination sessions continued to appear, most commonly in the spellings of proper names (Euripides and Laius were, as usual, often misspelt as were Agave, and Dionysus) and other common words such as the various forms of prophesy. There continues to be confusion over the difference between sympathy and empathy, and the use of revenge and avenge. Misuse of technical terms, such as *stichomythia* and *anagnoresis* is still a problem for many candidates. The majority of candidates had a good knowledge of the plays studied, and were able to express a personal opinion about the themes discussed in the questions.

A1 on *Medea* was more popular than A2 from *Bacchae*. Of the two essay questions, B3 on the most tragic character in *Hippolytus* was the more popular question by far.

Comments on Individual Questions

- A1**
- (a) Most candidates knew the general details of events before the passage started. However, many omitted details, with the discussion between the Nurse and the Tutor, and surprisingly, the scene with Creon, being left out by a considerable number of candidates.
 - (b) Part (b) produced a range of responses. Candidates were able to extract relevant material from the passage, listing the arguments put forward by Jason, and some comment, but only the better answers appreciated Jason's point of view, even if the candidates disagreed with him.
 - (c) Part (c) showed that candidates had an appreciation of Jason's attitude towards Medea. Many answers simply listed traits of his behaviour, but there were areas which were not explored. The ending of the play, and Jason's reaction to Medea actually killing their children were often not mentioned. The challenge many candidates found was to include both detail from the passage and elsewhere, with appropriate analysis of Jason's behaviour. Most considered him to be patronising, but there were answers which expressed sympathy for his position.
- A2**
- (a) While most candidates knew the main details of the play before the scene in the paper, many omitted the speech of the Herdsman, and Pentheus' reaction to it. Many also neglected to mention that a messenger reported Pentheus' death.
 - (b) For Part (b), almost all candidates could select and explain some examples of dramatic effectiveness, but found explaining its impact and why it is effective more difficult. This was especially true of the use of *stichomythia*.
 - (c) In Part (c), candidates often focused on the role of Cadmus in the passage, and neglected other areas, such as his worship of Dionysus with Tiresias and advice to Pentheus. Very few mentioned his punishment at the hands of Dionysus. Good answers tackled both the way he brought Agave to her senses, and his role as a contrast to Pentheus in behaviour and attitude.

Report on the Units taken in January 2009

- B3** This was the more popular essay and elicited a good range of responses. Much depended on how the candidates viewed what constitutes a “tragic character”. All three characters were discussed to a lesser or greater degree, with most candidates deciding that Theseus was the most tragic figure because he remained alive to suffer, while both Phaedra and Hippolytus were dead. Both Hippolytus and Phaedra were considered as tragic by some candidates as they considered that their suffering was not their fault, with Phaedra’s attempts to resist her love, and Hippolytus’ refusal to break his oath both being cited as reasons for them being the most tragic. Some candidates seemed to have reproduced a prepared essay on sympathy, rather than concentrating on the question on the paper.
- B4** Answers tended to concentrate on Aphrodite and Dionysus, with Artemis, and her intention for revenge on Aphrodite, being neglected by most candidates. There was some confusion over events in both plays, including both the reasons why Aphrodite and especially Dionysus desired revenge. Textual support for the opinions expressed was not always strong, and a large number of candidates found it hard to express a preference.

2746 Greek Comedy 1

General Comments

Most candidates showed a reasonable awareness of the content of the plays and the political background, although many had difficulty separating fantasy from reality.

A1 and A2 were answered by roughly equal numbers while B4 (not always a wise choice) was more popular than B3.

The spelling of such names as Trygaeus, Amphitheus and (inevitably) Euripides proved a challenge to many, and a larger percentage of candidates than usual seemed to have difficulty in deciding what constituted a sentence.

The examiners were, however, cheered by the reference to 'the lawsuit that Procleon was wearing'.

Comments on Individual Questions

- A1**
- (a) Most candidates mentioned Amphitheus in some guise or other and the wine skins – and many remembered the number of years correctly. Less successful were the responses to the second question, where candidates failed to mention who the opposition was and why they were hostile, and rarely managed a coherent explanation of the hostage ploy.
 - (b) Some examples of what appear to be straightforward references to 'reality' (the earthquake and the fleet preparations) were overlooked by most. Many grasped the central importance of the Megarian Decree but seemed happy to accept the kidnapping of the tarts as the most significant cause of the war.
 - (c) The examiners were generous in allowing interpretations of what constituted persuasion. However AO1 marks were not gained by those who failed to give examples of how the persuasion worked. For example, the claim was made that Dikaiopolis managed to persuade Euripides to hand over the beggar's costume etc. without any mention of such tactics as calling him 'sweet Euripides'. Most answers concentrated on the interaction with the Acharnians, Euripides and Lamachus but a few good responses went on to include the non-persuasive dealings with Nicarchus, Dercetes etc and thus were in a stronger position to make an evaluation.
- A2**
- (a) The participants were usually identified correctly (although Procleon was sometimes forgotten and Sosias often introduced). Credit was given for mention of the earlier escape attempts (*inside* a donkey seemed a step too far!) but high-scoring answers had to cite at least some elements of the immediate action – such as Procleon's escape by rope, the Wasps' stinging attack on Xanthias and Anticleon's use of smoking torches to overcome them.

Report on the Units taken in January 2009

- (b) This question proved difficult for most but was balanced by generally detailed and successful answers to (c). Better efforts drew a comparison between the rational and calm Anticleon and the irrationality of the other speakers. It proved difficult for most to exemplify where the exaggeration was occurring and many settled for answering a 'comment on the humour of this passage' question.
 - (c) Credit was given for references to setting up the mock court but most candidates sensibly concentrated on the symposium preparations and its aftermath. The vividness of Xanthias' description and the sauciness and physicality of the flute-girl scene ensured that AO1 marks were high. Some candidates, however, then forgot actually to answer the question.
- B3** Most of the obvious items – the dung cakes, War's mortar ingredients and the meat to bribe Hermes – were usually identified and there were some successful interpretations of the symbolism behind them. Most candidates were also able to give some substance to the link between war and food shortages in general. As usual, only the best answers went on to try to evaluate the importance of food in the play in comparison to other factors.
- B4** A significant minority of candidates were misled into assuming that 'those of low status' in the quotation and 'the slaves' in the prompt were the same – and that that was all they had to discuss. This assumption clearly ignored the reference to the main characters in the prompt. It seems that these candidates did not identify Dikaiopolis, Trygaeus and Procleon as being of low status. It was difficult for the examiners to award many marks for this interpretation. Those answers which did discuss both the main characters and the slaves were usually able to catalogue the former's extraordinary activities, although only the best made a clear distinction between the status of Procleon and that of his son.

2747 Greek Art and Architecture 1

General Comments

The performance of candidates was very much in line with previous January sessions. There was an even split across the questions and no particular topic proved to be more popular or better answered than another.

The range of marks varied considerably with examiners finding both very weak papers and some outstanding scripts although these seemed fewer than in previous sessions. Most candidates were able to provide clear evidence of careful learning and the ability to analyse critically though in some scripts this was only seen sporadically and only a few were able to sustain a consistent level across the whole paper.

The quality of the AO3 seemed markedly worse than usual with a good deal of wayward spelling, punctuation, lack of paragraphing and poor expression.

Comments on Individual Questions

- A1**
- (a) Both the Amasis Painter neck amphora, depicting Dionysus and the two Maenads, and the Exekias belly amphora, depicting Achilles and Ajax were generally well known and candidates often scored well on the identification question. The shape and the dates sometimes caused candidates a little difficulty. There were a few very poor scores here.
 - (b) The subject matter of the pot was known, if in varying degrees of detail. There were no misidentifications of the three figures. Discussion of the composition of the scene was either non-existent or tended to focus on awkward anatomy. When composition was tackled there were, as always, some sensitive and comprehensive discussions of how the painter had composed the scene. It was pleasing to read so many answers which discussed the decorative motifs. It was often the decorative motifs, such as the rays and spirals, which formed the basis of candidates' discussions of composition.
 - (c) Candidates often misinterpreted what they were asked to do in this question. They seemed quite secure when discussing and comparing the two pots in front of them but were less secure when trying to broaden out their discussion and explain which aspects of the painters' work they preferred. Some did not refer to any other pots by either painter; others could refer to the Dionysus kylix by Exekias; others were able to refer to a range of pots by both painters – these included Achilles and Penthesilea, and the Suicide of Ajax by Exekias and the Women Weaving and Wedding Procession lekythoi by the Amasis Painter. Exekias was the most popular of the two painters, with candidates being able to make a range of points about incision, composition and intensity. Few noted the greater emotion in Exekias' painting.

- A2**
- (a) Candidates were less certain in their answers on the Propylaia and there were a significant number of incorrect identifications ranging from the temple of Athena Nike to the Erechtheion, and from the temple of Apollo at Delphi to the temple of Zeus at Olympia. Consequential error was applied in (b) and (c) to award candidates some marks for their knowledge of the building they had identified, provided the information was related to the question.
 - (b) The answers were often limited to building techniques or were more general, for instance quarrying and transporting stone. The prompts in the question were often ignored. Answers tended to centre around the idea that the Propylaia was built on a slope and the problems of the Athena Nike sanctuary. Few answers could make any further relevant points.
 - (c) This was generally more successfully answered than (b), although knowledge in some scripts tended to be quite rudimentary with only a few remembering details such as the painted ceiling and the use of the dark Eleusinian limestone. A good number of candidates, however, gave sensitive and quite personal answers regarding how the building might have been perceived and used, which scored well under AO2. Few managed to tackle the whole question and strike the balance between function/suitable for purpose and the idea of impressive.

- B3**
- There were some knowledgeable and well-organised answers which drew on a wide range of examples from the Women and Symposia filmstrip, demonstrating a very good knowledge of the material. The answers fell into two distinct groups: those who became side-tracked from the question and just gave a factual account of events at the symposium, and those who had a range of strong points to make as to why the subject might appeal to painters. In addition, some candidates missed the second part of the question.

As in previous sessions, there were still candidates who did not seem to have seen pots from the Women and Symposia filmstrip and struggled to find appropriate examples from Woodford, often employing mythological scenes to support their line of argument.

- B4**
- Knowledge of the sanctuaries was generally satisfactory, with some answers showing an impressive level of factual detail. Candidates displayed a secure familiarity with the three main sanctuaries, and a significant number also brought in Bassai as a comparison. The evaluation was a little more varied, from those who had a range of very good ideas about different factors affecting the layout of the sanctuaries to those who discussed one point such as terrain, to the exclusion of other factors. Few candidates mentioned the 'sacred spot' as the starting point of any sanctuary and there is still some confusion about the role of the temple in worship. There was an increase in the number of candidates who thought that substituting a diagram for a reasoned argument would gain high marks. Whilst diagrams are always a welcome addition and show knowledge of the sites, if they are accurate, they are no replacement for a full evaluative essay. To gain AO2 marks there must be an attempt to answer the question and do more than provide a 'guided tour' of a site.

Grade Thresholds

Advanced GCE Classical Civilisation (3816, 7816)
January 2009 Examination Series

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
2736	Raw	100	75	67	59	51	43	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2740	Raw	100	75	66	57	49	41	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2741	Raw	100	78	69	60	52	44	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2746	Raw	100	76	67	59	51	43	0
	UMS	100	80	70	60	50	40	0
2747	Raw	100	73	64	55	46	38	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	21.6	54.5	78.4	96.6	98.9	100	88
7816	0.0	16.7	83.3	100	100	100	8

96 candidates aggregated this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see:
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