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1999 Higher School Certificate Classical Greek Notes from the Examination Centre

2/3 Unit (Common)

Written Examination

Section I - Sophocles *Philoctetes* and Herodotus II

General Comments

Candidates translated the passages well overall. Candidates handled the commentary in Question 2 better for the *Philoctetes*.

Specific Comments

Question 1

Part (a) and (b)

Candidates translated both passages reasonably well overall but part (b) a little better than part (a). Some candidates did not observe useful pointers in the textbook. In part (a) some candidates did not bring out syntax precisely, specifically:

- πρὸς τ' εἴ τι ... ἐστι
- οἴοις
- ὅσοισί
- ἐνναίοντά με

Some candidates did not observe the tense change between ὀρώς and ἐξήκουσας.

Some did not render the superlative signification of πλεῖστον. In part (b) some candidates did not observe the significance of certain uses of particles/adverbs, specifically:

- καὶ (line 2)
- ἀλλ' ... μὴν νῦν· (line 7)
- ἄν (for ἄ ἄν) (line 10)
- καὶ ... γ' (line 11)

The tenses of ἤκω and ἤσθα were not rendered properly by some candidates.

Part (c) and (d)

Candidates translated both passages well, although part (d) proved more challenging. In part (c) some candidates brought out the plural of πένθεα while most expressed it as a collective singular.

Candidates did not observe the plural of ἴβις, although τὰς made this clear. In part (d) some rendered ὅτε as though it were ὅτι. Some candidates did not translate the two words αὐτοῦ ἐκείνου in such a way as to show their meaning clearly.

Question 2

Part (a) Philoctetes

All candidates chose passage (i). Candidates recognised the context of Philoctetes' attack, but only some identified that it was the second one. All established τὸν τοῦ Διὸς παῖδ' as a reference to Heracles and described the circumstances in which Philoctetes received the bow. Many connected the reference in the next line ἃ νῦν σὺ σώζεις with this. Most connected the bow reference and the 'Lemnian fire' with the idea of persuading Neoptolemos to help Philoctetes die. Some identified the 'Lemnian fire' as the volcano Mosychlos. Candidates' responses to τί φῆς; τί σιγῶς varied greatly. Some believed it suggested much about Neoptolemos' state of mind, perhaps going beyond what is really suggested. Explaining Neoptolemos' silence produced some judicious comments which linked to his next words in the play and specifically Neoptolemos' developing pity. None linked it to Philoctetes' request for assisted suicide in spite of the suggestion in the textbook.

Part (b) Herodotus

Generally speaking many candidates translated much of the extracts without actually commenting on or analysing the text. Most candidates chose passage (i). A number of candidates choosing passage (ii) wrote much about Cheops but did not discuss another important reference, Rhampsinitus, adequately. There was evidence that many candidates were unfamiliar with or simply did not use the notes in the textbook.

Section II - Unseen Translation

Question 3

General Comments

The verse unseen discriminated between candidates markedly, while candidates translated the prose unseen well.

Specific Comments

Part (a) Verse Unseen

The best translations still had a few errors. The poorest translations did not follow the text sufficiently closely. The following vocabulary items proved challenging for many:

δορί, μοῖρα, οἰκήτορας (even confused with οἶκτον), οἶκτον, πατρίς, πατρίδ', πᾶσ' - as though πάντα, σφάζομαι - passive, χάρις, τίκτουσα, ἀπορρεῖ, εἰς ... βλέπω

The following syntax proved challenging for many:

εἰς ὅ τι βλέπω, ἀνδρί ... προσεῖναι (some ignored the vocabulary item), ὅτου ... πεπονθότος, οὐκ ... ἀνήρ, ἔχειν ... θέλοισι' ἄν', τὰ τῆσδ' ἔπη.

Part (b) Prose Unseen

Some of the translations were outstanding. The following vocabulary items proved challenging for many:

πυρᾶ, δῆ (which was often ignored), εἶναι (which was often rendered as 'to go').

The following syntax proved challenging for many:

τῶν ... λόγος, αὐτοῦ ταύτη, τὸ στρατόπεδον τοῦτον ...

Section III - Prose Composition

Question 4

General Comments

Candidates displayed a competent syntactic manipulation and a good range of vocabulary. There were a number of minor accentuation errors.

Specific Comments

Candidates showed imagination well to handle such periphrases as 'concluded', 'had known'.

The following proved challenging for translation:

'an interesting story', 'what lay beyond', 'beside it'.

Section IV - Essays

Question 5

General Comments

There was quite a variety in the quality of the responses to the essay question among candidates. Better responses analysed the texts in some detail. Weaker responses did not consider the texts as a whole.

Specific Comments

Part (a)

Subsection (i)

Most of the candidates did this question. Candidates brought out the contrast of the two characters and commented well on the conflict of the moral code for Neoptolemus, how the relationship of Neoptolemus and Odysseus changed in the course of the play, their similar purposes but different methods in securing Philoctetes' return to Troy. Few responses used the information from Philoctetes' description of Odysseus. None mentioned the important feeling in the Ancient World that character was static and how this informs our understanding of Neoptolemus' changes.

Subsection (ii)

Candidates described the marooning of Philoctetes and how he is always complaining about it. Many responses discussed the isolating effect of Philoctetes' disease which has made him separate and different and how this situation attracted pity. It was worthwhile to mention that Sophocles chose to make Lemnos a desert island. Candidates sometimes drifted off the point of the question.

Part (b)

Subsection (i)

Half the candidates chose this question. Weaker responses centred on ὡς clauses and the variation of specific words. Some misquoting was evident in the weaker responses. Better responses brought out Herodotus' inclusion of small anecdotes, symmetrical composition, 'paradoxes', comments leaving the reader to decide credibility, description of exotic places, his vivid imagery and interesting method of reasoning over issues.

Subsection (ii)

This question was handled better than part (b) subsection (i). Weaker responses included mainly quotations from the secondary sources with little of the candidates' own analysis. Better responses used a closer, more specific reading of the text with their own analysis. Some utilised the structure of Book II well to establish the purpose of the text and the flow of the argument presented by the author in order to identify the 'aim'.

3 Unit

Written Examination

Section I - Homer *Iliad* VI

Question 1

Most candidates translated the passages very well. There were few idiomatic errors, still fewer errors of morphology and syntax. Many brought out the nuances of particles well, e.g. δὴ καὶ. The comment question in part (a) was answered well by most candidates. They demonstrated a thorough knowledge of background material. All made clear links with other parts of Book VI. Candidates did not respond to the comment question of part (b) as well as they did for part (a). Most candidates did not give thorough information about the fate of Astyanax and Andromache, although all identified them correctly.

Section II - Essays

Question 2

Part (a) Philoctetes

Keeping the answer to the question of action proved challenging for some candidates. The idea of action and its effect proved difficult to isolate.

Part (b) Homer

All candidates made a definite attempt to handle the full implication of the question. Candidates made good use of the small amount of source material available for the question, such as Helen blaming herself, Andromache blaming Hector, Helen being an unpitiable victim. Better responses considered both characters together or examined one trait at a time and how both characters fitted in with it. Candidates also referred to Helen and Hector's relationship and how both Helen and Andromache had 'lost' their families.

Part (c) Herodotus

No candidate attempted this question.

Section III - Unseen Translation

Question 3

All candidates translated the unseen passage well, some outstandingly well. Vocabulary items which proved challenging were:

Ἰδηθεν, μεδέων, κύδιστε, ποντοπόροισιν·

Syntax which proved challenging was:

ὅστις clause, αὐτὸς ... ἐχέτω ..., ... ἀποδοῦναι.