

# CLASSICAL GREEK

Paper 9787/01  
Verse Literature

## General Comments

The majority of candidates knew their texts very well and were able to write about them with some sophistication. They were able to do this both in their detailed comment on passages and in their essays where an impressive amount of relevant detail was recalled by candidates. Most candidates seemed to organise their time well and fewer than last year ran out of time on the Unseen Literary Criticism question.

## Comments on Individual Questions

### Question 1

- (i) Candidates were clear about the events immediately preceding the passage and most were awarded full marks.
- (ii) The translation was, for the most part, very accurate. Line 2 presented a problem for some candidates, as they seemed unsure who might be touching whom.
- (iii) There were some excellent answers here. Candidates were able to trace Electra's reaction to the news that Orestes was alive, noting the superlatives of lines 7 and 9, Electra's wish for the messenger's future happiness (line 9), and her concern for the material circumstances of her brother's existence in lines 11-14. She is eager to know as well whether the messenger brings any word (line 15).
- (iv) There were, again, some very good answers to this question. Most noted the various ways in which Electra describes her own impoverished situation. Some candidates argued that the repetitive nature of Electra's complaints were evidence that her situation is indeed very bad; others argued that there might be some self-indulgence, some wallowing in her misery.

### Question 2

- (i) Most translated lines 1-5 accurately, although some candidates were unsure of the meaning of *λειψάνον*.
- (ii) There was a wider range of answers to this question. The best were able to observe that the scene is dramatically ironic and also, for the audience, rather tense (will the Old Man correctly identify Orestes?). Some candidates argued well that there is something baffling about Orestes' behaviour, and that Electra too is baffled, most especially by the Old Man's exclamation in line 11.
- (iii) There were some very good, very knowledgeable answers here. (Several candidates wrote very well about the differences between the recognition scene here and that in Aeschylus.) Most argued that the scene was unconvincing, especially in relation to Electra's behaviour. Having been so keen for Orestes to return, it was strange – it was said – that she should be as half-hearted and reluctant as she is. It was perhaps a surprise that no candidate tried to argue that the scene could be seen as very sophisticated psychologically.

### Question 3

- (i) Most candidates knew this passage well. They were able to analyse effectively the doubts of Zeus and the intervention of Athene; they were also able to remember that Zeus had thought something similar about his own son, Sarpedon, in book 16. The more sophisticated answers argued that Zeus' claims about his love for Hector could be seen as fickle and that that, along with Athene's description of death, could be seen as creating pathos.
- (ii) Most translations were accurate.
- (iii) Again, this was answered well. Most candidates were able to comment on the pace of the scene, with reference in particular to the use of active verbs. The two similes also received detailed and critical treatment.

### Question 4

- (i) This was very well answered on the whole. Whichever adjectives were exemplified – contemptuous, insulting, sarcastic – candidates were able to demonstrate clearly the negative nature of Achilles' tone.
- (ii) This was mainly well answered. The horror and pathos of the death anticipated by Hector was well observed. More could have been made of the nature of Hector's appeal – or supplication – to Achilles (and the fact that Achilles has himself been a beneficiary of supplication). There was some comment on the high price that Hector was prepared to have paid for his body and how that contributed to pathos.
- (iii) There were some disappointing answers here, as few candidates seemed to have a sophisticated understanding of what a Greek hero is. Judgements about Achilles' language being extreme seemed not quite to grasp that Achilles' extraordinariness here is the point. Knox, Segal, Goldhill et al. would help.
- (iv) Well translated, for the most part.

### Question 5

Of the candidates who took the Euripides option, this was the most popular essay. Candidates were able to show the weakness of Orestes' character, mainly by reference to his clandestine return, the manner of his murder of Aegisthus, his need for Electra's help, and his reaction to the death of his mother. Candidates were also able to show that Electra indulges her sense of loss and is assiduously concerned with status. On whether these two characters engage our sympathy, there were some answers that simply asserted that they did not. The more sophisticated admitted that, at first sight, both Electra and Orestes are unsympathetic characters, but they also tried to put that reaction into context. Electra has lost both her sister and her father; she has been marginalised. Orestes has experienced the same loss and has been living in exile. In particular, there were a small number of candidates who successfully argued that the apparently weak nature of Orestes' return could instead be seen as Euripides injecting a dose of political realism into the myth.

### Question 6

Only one candidate answered this question, and they did so very well. The *success de scandale* of Electra's first appearance – shorn hair, shabby clothes, carrying water – was well observed, as were the possibilities for some interesting inconsistencies between word and action. On the other hand, it was clearly seen that some parts of the tragedy – the messenger speech, for instance – are very much like a radio play.

### Question 7

Not many decided to answer this question, but those who did, did so well, with a clear understanding of the meaning of *ευκλειως*. The interesting differences between Hector and Achilles as heroes were well observed, as was the role played by divine intervention. Hector's attachment to the heroic code was well put into context by, for instance, reference to his exchange with Andromache in book 6. It was also well argued that Hector betrays a certain lack of understanding of Achilles: he gets to learn, of course, once the fighting starts.

### Question 8

The majority tackled this essay. Much good detail from the text was recalled, so marks for the first assessment objective tended to be high. However, the understanding of the concept of 'hero' was sometimes limited and simple. Many candidates asserted that Achilles, in his threats to mutilate Hector's corpse and even eat it, was acting in an unheroic way: little or no reference was made to the fact that the mutilation of the corpse is very common in *The Iliad*, and that heroes often want to assert that heroic status precisely by taking it away from someone else. It was disappointing as well that there was little comment on the possibility that heroes might be defined by their 'extraordinariness'.

### Question 9

Compared to last year, this question was generally well tackled. There were fewer answers that depended entirely on (dubious) assertions about the sound effects of the poetry; answers were more concentrated – and more effectively so – on what the poetry says, with appropriate reference to stylistic features.

- (i) There were some very good answers here. Well commented on were: Andromache's various ways of addressing her son; the simile of the bird; the absence of Hector; the lethal leap from high up; the second set of addresses to do with breath and skin; the futility of Andromache's labours; Andromache's understanding that this is the last time that she will see her son alive.
- (ii) Clearly, Andromache despises Helen. Perhaps not enough was made of this important and obvious point. At the same time, some good observations were made about Andromache's attack on Helen's paternity (variously made), especially the list of her alternative fathers. More could have been made of the contrasts and connections made between Greeks and Barbarians (especially in lines 16 and 23).
- (iii) There were some extremely good answers here, as well as some very weak ones. Well observed were the addresses in line 1, the simile in line 3, lines 7-8, and the various apostrophes (9-10; 19-20; 23-24).

# CLASSICAL GREEK

---

**Paper 9787/02**  
**Prose Literature**

Virtually all the candidates performed well on this paper. This year all the Centres chose to study the Herodotus VI text and there was plenty of evidence of good teaching of this material. This year, longer passages were set for the commentary questions, and this gave the candidates more opportunity to make a range of different points. It was pleasing that most of them took advantage of this. Nearly all the candidates seemed to have learnt the text thoroughly and the standard of answers was better this year. Most candidates demonstrated that they understood the meaning of the passages and they provided evidence of thoughtful reading of the original Greek.

Time management is sometimes a challenge on this paper, but this seemed less of a problem than last year and most candidates scored consistently on all three questions. The two Herodotus essays were equally popular and the standard of answers was impressive. Most candidates demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the text and they answered the essay questions effectively. The best candidates showed that they had thought carefully about either the quality of Herodotus' explanation of events or the distinctiveness of his style and they were able to communicate their ideas effectively. Candidates should be encouraged to write a short plan so they can structure their essays appropriately.

There were a number of outstanding performances on this paper and the work of those candidates who engaged effectively with the Herodotus essay questions was particularly impressive.



# CLASSICAL GREEK

---

<p><b>Paper 9787/03</b> <b>Unseen Translation</b></p>
---

The majority of candidates performed well on this paper and there were a number of exceptional scripts.

Most candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of Greek grammar and vocabulary and made good attempts to translate the more complex sentences. Candidates who demonstrated a good understanding of how particles, such as *men* and *de*, connected the different clauses scored particularly well.

The majority of candidates found the verse unseen passage straightforward, but there were still plenty of challenging sections to differentiate the candidates. The strongest candidates showed an impressive knowledge of Greek vocabulary and they were able to recognise all the different verb and noun endings and to translate the passage accurately. The scansion was done to a good standard by most candidates.

Candidates should be encouraged to read a wide variety of Greek authors in their Lower Sixth year. A few candidates struggled with the Thucydides prose unseen, but most rose to the challenge and it was clear that they had been very well prepared for this paper.

# CLASSICAL GREEK

---

Paper 9787/04

Prose Composition or Comprehension

## General Comments

Candidates' answers were of an extremely high standard, even better than last year. The prose which was awarded the highest mark (39/40) was a superb piece of Greek: clear, precise and with each sentence well connected. Unlike last year, the candidates who attempted the comprehension were weaker. Candidates clearly had plenty of time to complete the paper. Some of those who attempted the prose composition had written out several versions

## Comments on Individual Questions

### **Section A**

This was generally extremely well done.

First sentence

Good understanding of *κατα, πριν*; some good attempts at uses of participles; some confusion over the aorist passive of *σωζω*.

Second sentence

Some nice uses of the genitive absolute here. Some confusions, though, about how to construe 'had been confident' and 'would capture'. Also, quite a few candidates were confused about which was the indirect question at the end.

Third sentence

The concessive clause caused some difficulty, but otherwise this was well done.

Fourth sentence

Good. Most candidates handled the indirect speech well.

Fifth sentence

This sentence – though apparently more simple – caused problems, mainly to do with the participles required.

Final sentence

There were some ingenious ways to translate this, though there was some confusion about what sort of demonstrative to use. Also, there were quite a few candidates who did not seem to know getting angry in Greek when it is in the past (aorist passive).

### **Section B**

The small number of candidates who attempted this showed a fairly good understanding of the narrative. However, the questions about grammar and syntax – with 14 out of the 40 marks on offer – were not well done: in particular **(x)** about case usage, **(xi) (b)** about dual form adjectives, and **xii (b)** about *παριστημι* were not well done.