

Classical Greek

General Certificate of Secondary Education **GCSE J291**

General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course) **GCSE J091**

Report on the Units

June 2010

J291/J091/R/10

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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 on GCSE Classical Greek

This is a new, unitised specification. During this session Units B401, B403, B404 and B405 were available to candidates; next year, in 2011, the full range of papers will be set.

Although candidate numbers were very small indeed, the standard of work was high. There was evidence to suggest that candidates had enjoyed all their set texts, both verse and prose, and that they had taken the opportunity to study and use a large variety of written and visual source material. For the language paper, Unit B401, the reduced vocabulary list and grammar and syntax requirements gave access to candidates from a wide variety of backgrounds. Some Centres had prepared candidates from Year 9 or 10, while others had entered those from Year 11 or above. It is hoped that the new style of examination will continue to foster this spirit of flexibility and encourage candidates to enter varying combinations of Units to suit their programme of study. This is particularly important for a subject such as Classical Greek, where very often teaching time is limited.

The examiners would like to congratulate candidates and their teachers on their careful preparation for this examination. Many of the scripts were most enjoyable to read.

B401 Classical Greek Language 1

Approximately ninety candidates entered for the new Unit B401 and, in general, the standard of performance was high. There was no evidence that any candidate struggled to complete the paper within the time allocated; indeed a few had time to write rough versions of their translations and copy them out neatly.

For many candidates the comprehension questions proved more accessible than the translation passage, which was perhaps to be expected: in fact the translation provided the most useful tool for differentiation.

Common problems were as follows: the usual reversal of verb and participle; the failure to recognise comparatives and superlatives; result clauses, which for some reason always seem to cause candidates difficulty; impersonal verbs; numbers; confusion between ἐπεί, ἔπειτα and εἶπεν, and between ἔδοξεν, διώκω and διδάσκω.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

- 1 This was generally answered correctly.
- 2 Some candidates struggled to identify 'hatred' as Hera's feeling, but generally this was well answered.
- 3 Most candidates answered correctly.
- 4 (a) This was almost universally correct.
(b) Most candidates scored at least one mark here. The common errors were to omit 'easily' or to assume that Herakles himself was naked when killing the snakes, rather than just his 'bare hands'.

5 (a) The most important word to grasp here was 'again' (αὐθίς), which was essential to portray Hera's persistence. A number of candidates missed this and were thus able to score only one mark from the two available.

(b) This question challenged some candidates, who were uncertain who was maddening whom and who did the killing: use of the glossary ought to have made it possible to work out that οἰστροηθείς was an aorist passive participle, and recognition of Hera as the agent in ὑπὸ τῆς θεᾶς to see that she could not be the subject of ἐφόνευσεν.

6 (a) This was perhaps the most puzzling question of the paper. A number of candidates selected the correct three-word phrase in Greek, but then went on simply to list translations of the three words separately, rather than to render the phrase as a whole. The wording of this question needs to be examined carefully in order to avoid this kind of problem in future. For those who managed to translate the phrase as a whole, the superlative of 'very bitter' (πικροτάτῳ) was often missing.

(b) Most candidates answered this question correctly.

7 The translation passage:

1 This was largely very well managed, with most candidates scoring at least 3 marks out of 4. Main errors were the reversal of participle and verb – 'arriving...were disguised' instead of 'arrived...disguised' – and the omission of τινα.

2 In this section most candidates were able to score at least 2 marks out of 3. It was common for γάρ to be omitted, ἔμελλον to be rendered 'wanted' or 'wished', the superlative πλείστας either to be translated as the positive 'many' or to be muddled with πλούσιος or parts of πλέω. Candidates often opted for a singular door, had the travellers look for, rather than ask for, a

meal and a bed and, as above, reversed verb and participle –

'knocked...asking for' rather than 'knocking...asked for'.

- 3 In this section the main problem tended to be the result construction itself, which, if omitted, was a major error and led to the loss of one mark.
Otherwise, most candidates managed the sentence well, although an appreciable number made πάντες into an accusative, which altered the sense somewhat.
- 4 Many candidates struggled with the first half of this section, but were redeemed by correct translation of the second half. Some muddled ἔπειτα and ἐπεὶ, translated ὀργιζόμενος as an aorist participle rather than a present and missed the indirect statement altogether. Others made Hermes the subject of εἶπεν. A number of candidates found λείπεται μία οἰκία, μικροτέρα τῶν ἄλλων very challenging: μία was frequently ignored (presumably not recognised), Hermes was often staying in the house and the house itself was sometimes 'the smallest of the others'. The remainder of the sentence, however, from οὐ ᾄκουν, was rarely incorrect.
- 5 The last section was usually either completely right or very wrong indeed. The impersonal verb ἔδοξεν was often not recognised or confused with ἔδει or parts of διώκω or διδάσκω, and καί meaning 'also' was not appreciated by many. All candidates, however, recognised enough words to score at least 1 mark, if not 2.
In general, however, the translation was well done: the comments above refer, of necessity, to the common mistakes. Many candidates produced good, accurate versions written in fluent English, which were always a pleasure to read.
- 8 This was almost universally correct.

- 9 Most candidates scored either two or three marks here, although some were convinced, despite just having written a translation of the first part of the story, that Baucis was a man!
- 10 (a) This was well answered.
- (b) This was almost universally correct.
- (c) Here the main problem for candidates was to work out which was the subject of the verb and which the complement: large numbers wrote ‘that the travellers were not strangers, but gods’, which of course was the wrong way round: οὗτοι οἱ ξένοι were the subject, ὁδοιπόροι the complement.
- 11 This was almost universally correct.
- 12 Although most candidates answered correctly here, identifying Baucis and Philemon as the αὐτῶν, a few misinterpreted the participle as a present rather than an aorist, which changed the meaning of their answer.
- 13 The vast majority of candidates wrote δεινότατα or ἀπέθανον δεινότατα. Any who did attempt to use τῆς γῆς ἀποκρυφθείσης tended to restrict themselves to the participle alone, which was insufficient.
- 14 (a) Most candidates answered correctly. Simply ‘they worshipped’ was not enough – the gods were necessary to complete the answer.
- (b) Even candidates who had lost their way somewhat managed to answer this correctly, even if they did not give quite enough detail for both marks: a random pair of trees growing with branches intertwined was not quite enough, as it needed to be obvious that the trees were part of the transformation of Baucis and Philemon.
- 15 The majority of candidates coped quite happily with the derivations. Some muddled Greek and Latin words, writing ‘deity’, for example, instead of something derived from the Greek θεός. The main points to grasp in preparation for this type of

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question are that the English word must draw directly on the Greek root and that the definition must convey that the candidate understands the connection. For example, 'theology' defined as 'study of religion' was acceptable, because clearly the candidate realised the connection between 'god' in Greek and the English word. However, 'chronic' defined as 'serious' could not be given any credit, because the word 'serious' does not suggest any connection with 'time' in Greek.

In general this was a very encouraging set of performances on this new Unit. Candidates and their teachers are to be congratulated on their thorough preparation.

B403 Classical Greek Prose Literature

A small number of candidates entered for Unit B403 this first year, with an overwhelming majority choosing the Herodotus in preference to the Antiphon. As on the Legacy specification, evidence from the scripts suggests that those who opted for the Herodotus found their text generally more approachable and possibly more enjoyable than was the case with the Antiphon. However, candidates produced excellent work on both authors.

Most candidates managed all the multiple choice, comprehension and context questions very comfortably. The only exception to this was Question 17, where misunderstandings of the English word 'ransom' led to a reconsideration of the Mark Scheme.

It was noticeable that the attention paid by candidates to the detail of translation was variable. Now that the translation question is marked according to a grid, rather than word by word, it is even more important to minimise the number of 'minor errors' within the space of the chosen portion, as it is disappointing to see candidates make three minor errors and immediately lose two of the five available marks. Minor errors may constitute, for example, a wrong tense, a singular for plural, or even a missed particle, if this is felt to contribute significantly to the tone of the piece. Although it is, of course, desirable for candidates to write their translation in good English, this very rarely requires major re-structuring of the Greek. Examiners prefer to see that the candidate understands the Greek and is able to reflect the author's original emphasis and tone by preserving, wherever possible, the original sentence structure. Centres are strongly advised to use the prescribed edition of the set text, as the notes and vocabulary are invaluable for preparation of the translation.

Other questions which candidates sometimes found challenging were those where they were required to convey the argument in their own words. On these occasions, candidates would be well advised to think logically through the argument and ensure that they have conveyed each step clearly and concisely, as one missed step can easily lead to one lost mark.

For the first time at GCSE, candidates now have the opportunity to write about their set text at some length, and there is evidence to suggest that many have enjoyed meeting this challenge. However, some experienced difficulty in using the bullet points to illustrate their answer to the question, in rare cases leaving the question itself unanswered despite offering plenty of evidence. Others preferred to focus on the question, not always addressing all three bullet points equally: this automatically reduced the number of marks available to the candidate. A tiny minority of candidates attempted to answer these questions without referring to the Greek from the vital passage at all; unfortunately, in these cases, no matter how excellent the points the candidate may make, the answer is automatically ineligible for consideration at Level 4. As examiners are very much aware that these long comment questions pose a particular challenge to candidates, consideration of the balance between bullet points and question is ongoing.

Although this paper appears, at first glance, to be long, there is little evidence to suggest that many candidates struggled to complete it within the time. As always, one or two scripts contained shorter answers to some of the longer questions, and there was the occasional omission altogether, but, to counterbalance this, there were many candidates who filled every available space in the answer booklet and went on to use further sheets of paper. It is

clear that more writing space needs to be allocated for all but the shortest questions, if only to give candidates room in which to adjust their answers without compromising their length.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A: Herodotus

- Q.1 This was almost universally correct, although a few candidates thought that Astyages was king of the Persians, rather than of the Medes.
- Q.2 This was very well answered.
- Q.3 This was mostly correct, although a small number of candidates chose answer A rather than D.
- Q.4 Most candidates answered correctly, but a few clearly experienced difficulties with the translation of this sentence and wrote 'the most trustworthy servant of the Medes': here the word ἐπίτροπον has been moved from its own context and inserted in foreign territory. Another, less serious, error was the translation 'the most trustworthy of all the Medes', where the insertion of 'all' could be glossed over more easily.
- Q.5 In general this was answered correctly.
- Q.6(a) and (b) These were almost universally correct.
- Q.7 Most candidates answered this question with ease. A small number did not take note of the fact that two marks were available, consequently offering only half of the required answer, but otherwise there was no problem here.
- Q.8 In this translation question, the main 'minor errors' were the mistranslation of διέταξεν by 'chose' or 'commanded', the omission of αὐτῶν, the omission of πού, the translation of τινα αὐτῶν in the plural (ὀφθαλμόν similarly) and the mistranslation of the final phrase. This last phrase was sometimes rendered in the passive, sometimes translated in such a way as to suggest that it was 'the king's eye' who was doing the assigning and sometimes involved the omission of ὡς, which, paired with ἐκάστω, has the distributive meaning 'to each separately'. It is in cases such as this that the prescribed edition is particularly helpful.
- Q.9 This question was generally answered correctly.
- Q.10 Few candidates lost marks here, although occasionally an attempt was made to persuade examiners that a simple vocative is redolent of outrage or anger.
- Q.11 and 12 These questions provided a useful tool for differentiating candidates. Not all worked their way logically through Cyrus' argument, and a few had a tendency to repeat themselves. In general, though, everyone seemed to understand the main points and to have some good, plausible ideas about why the speech would make Astyages suspicious. A small number of

candidates used the physical evidence of Cyrus' appearance and conjecture about his age to support their answers to Question 12: unfortunately this information was outside the remit of the question and could not be credited.

Q.13 Most candidates wrote very well in response to this question. A few struggled to cover all three bullet points: the most common casualty was bullet point two, 'Harpagos' attitude to Astyages and the child', where his contempt for Astyages was not always recognised or was occasionally misinterpreted as contempt on account of his age (γέρων being seen as an insult, rather than an observation of fact and a stepping-stone in the point about the danger of Mandane's future accession). Most had very firm views on how far we could or could not be expected to sympathise with Harpagos' final solution to his dilemma.

Q.14 Again this question was very well answered by many candidates. Most were able to empathise with the poor herdsman as he obeyed the summons to Harpagos' house to be presented with an unknown errand, only to find a richly-dressed baby and a house filled with grief. The strongest candidates were able to sense the pressure brought to bear on the herdsman by the speed of events, the fact that he was bundled out carrying the baby almost before he had had a chance to register what was going on and the realisation, once he had heard the full story from the servant, that he himself was already implicated in any crime or disobedience – that Harpagos had, in fact, passed on his dilemma to the hapless herdsman. Most candidates illustrated their answers with plentiful examples from the Greek text. Those whose answers were less persuasive tended either not to address one of the bullet points or to include some doubtful interpretation of the story, although there were a few responses which were simply sketchy. One final point to note involves the vocative ὦ γυναῖκα: both here and in Question 10 some candidates used the simple vocative as evidence of emotion, translating 'Oh wife'. While this could possibly be used as part of a more detailed point about the herdsman's emotion, it would be worth pointing out to candidates the difference between 'O' and 'Oh' in English.

Many of the Herodotus scripts were a delight to read, as candidates had clearly engaged with the text as literature and had considered the story from the point of view of all the main characters.

Section B: Antiphon

Q.15 and 16 These were answered correctly.

Q.17 It became clear, on examination of the scripts, that most candidates were unclear as to the meaning of 'ransom' in English, with some viewing it from point of view of the person freeing the slaves, others from the point of view of those buying them back. In fairness to all the candidates, therefore, it was decided to award the mark to anyone who interpreted ἀπολύσων to suggest

that Herodes was getting rid of the slaves, whether by ransoming them (B), selling them (C) or setting them free (D).

- Q.18 (a) & (b) These were answered correctly.
- Q.19 This was almost universally correct.
- Q.20 It was clear from responses to this question that some candidates had lost the thread of the story, as they found it difficult to identify which facts they should already know by this point of the speech.
- Q.21 This was universally correct.
- Q.22 For the translation question there was a clear division between those candidates who could translate the passage very accurately indeed and those who had become lost.
- Q.23 This question served to differentiate between candidates who had retained control of the argument of the speech and those who had lost the thread.
- Q.24 The majority of candidates wrote very convincingly on Euxitheus' demolition of the prosecution's case, addressing all three bullet points successfully and illustrating their arguments from the Greek text.
- Q.25 and 26 Candidates answered these two questions very well. They understood clearly the impossible situation of the tortured slave and were able to muster Euxitheus' arguments for the invalidity of evidence obtained in this way. The only losses of marks tended to result from inadequate quotation from the Greek in Question 26.
- Q.27 Answers to this question were excellent, with candidates generally addressing all three bullet points with gusto.

This was a more complex text than the Herodotus, if only in terms of following the train of events as reported by Euxitheus. However, despite the occasional lapse, the overall performance on this Section was excellent.

Congratulations are due to our first cohort of candidates and their teachers, who prepared for this new Unit with such care and produced some very persuasive writing. It is heartening indeed to see candidates engage with this literature at so personal a level.

B404 Classical Greek Verse Literature

General Comments:

This is a new specification. There were very few entries: 26 in all, with 25 opting for Homer and one for Euripides. The overall standard was high and the majority of candidates were able to answer questions accurately, showing a good understanding of the content of the text studied, and in the extended answers often displaying a sound and appropriate knowledge of the Greek.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A: Homer

Passage 1: Athene speaks to Nausicaa

Qu.1. Almost all candidates were able to identify the Greek word describing Nausicaa as 'lazy'.

Qu.2 (a) and (b). Most candidates knew who needed beautiful clothes and why.

Passage 2: Nausicaa speaks to her father

Qu.3. All knew who Nausicaa was speaking to.

Qu.4 (a) and (b). Although most knew who needed clean clothes and why, a few candidates failed to note the two marks on offer for (a) and thus only gave one answer; this had a knock-on effect for (b).

Qu.5. Almost all candidates answered correctly this multiple choice question about Nausicaa going to the washing-pools.

Passage 3: Nausicaa's party arrives at the washing-pools

Qu.6. Attention must be drawn to the new marking grid for translation questions. It is particularly important to note that full marks are only awarded for a 'perfectly accurate' translation, and a translation containing more than two minor errors cannot score more than 3/5. Thus, if for example μάλα περ in the phrase μάλα περ ῥυπόωντα ('even very dirty clothes') was omitted, a mark was deducted, and any additional error in the translation caused a further deduction. Other minor but not insignificant errors were: the meaning of ὅτε, the two different meanings of ἐνθ', the sense of περι- in περικαλλέ'. Use should be made of the notes in the prescribed edition of the text, especially helpful here for translating the awkward ὑπεκπρορέει.

Passage 4: Odysseus supplicates Nausicaa

Qu.7. A number of good answers, but to score full marks candidates must address all three bullet points as well as making appropriate use of and reference to the Greek. Some answers on 'the tone of Odysseus' words' were brief and/or undeveloped. Unfortunately bullet points do have a tendency to divert attention away from the actual question and there was some evidence of this in a few answers.

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Passage 5: Athene causes Odysseus to wake up

Qu.8. Almost all candidates knew Athene's purpose.

Qu.9. Most knew what happened after Nausicaa threw the ball to one of her maids. If an answer did not gain full marks, it was usually because not enough information was given rather than a lack of understanding of the situation.

Qu.10. Almost all knew that the noise woke Odysseus up.

Qu.11. Most handled the multiple choice question (3 from 6) well. The most common mistake was to think that the maids, rather than Nausicaa, were about to fold the clothes.

Passage 6: Odysseus and the lion simile

Qu.12. See comments on qu.7 above. There was a tendency for candidates to quote phrases they could translate rather than phrases that contributed to the point being made. ὀρεσίτροφος and γυμνός περ ἑών were two such phrases that were generally underused in discussing the impression of Odysseus created by Homer.

Qu.13. This question, asking candidates to consider some general aspect of the text studied, was not particularly well handled overall. Candidates should either look to make two good points with a number of supporting examples, or more points but less extensively supported. Some answers put forward a number of weak ideas without any specific reference to the text.

Section B: Euripides

Insufficient number of scripts on which to base a report.

B405 Sources of Classical Greek

General Comments

Candidates reached a pleasing standard on the paper and in general were well prepared for the examination. Many candidates demonstrated a keen awareness of the way sources can be interpreted and an intelligent appreciation of their limitations. Some candidates could have made closer reference to sources to support their answer and could have analysed the sources more imaginatively rather than simply paraphrasing them. There was a good spread of marks, giving the examiners confidence that this is an accessible paper appealing to a broad spectrum of candidates and one that might encourage Centres either to introduce Classical Greek where there is none currently or enter students who are studying on restricted curriculum time. All candidates appeared to have had enough time to finish the paper, even though within the hour they had to read through the insert of sources, consider the questions and write the answers.

Comments on individual questions

- 1a** This proved more problematic than the examiners had originally anticipated as a substantial minority of candidates failed to appreciate the key elements of childbirth in the ancient world: pain and the risk of death. It therefore became a useful discriminator.
- 1b** Candidates answered this well
- 1c** There were some excellent responses to this question demonstrating sound background knowledge of the relations between men and women in the ancient world. Some chose to answer empathetically to good effect. There were some engaging answers arguing that the overwrought tone and hyperbolic content of Source A were compelling evidence for keeping women firmly at home – they would be hopeless on the battle field. It should be noted that even in emphatic pieces the candidates should support assertions by reference to the text.
- 2** Most candidates identified correctly a range of activities
- 3** This required a close reading of the source and the ability to select key phrases to answer the question. Some candidates simply copied out phrases without showing how they demonstrated affection. Some astute candidates suggested that the speaker was only pretending to be fond of his wife to gain sympathy.
- 4a** Disappointingly most candidates seemed to have copied out Hesiod word for word without demonstrating they understood what he meant. However, the examiners felt that the wording of the question justified their doing so and full marks were given in most cases.
- 4b** This caused some problems for candidates who misread the question. Consequently some answers listed the perpetrators of crimes rather than their victims or failed to realise the nature of their vulnerability – brothers' wives were not protected *per se*. Some candidates gave vague answers listing various acts of worship rather than listing specific groups of people who enjoyed Zeus's protection.

- 5a** This was done thoroughly by most candidates. Although it was possible to give a full answer by attentive reading of the sources, it was encouraging to see references to the Panathenaia and the City Dionysia.
- 5b** There were some good answers here but also a disquieting tendency to see Greek religious ceremony in Christian terms – repentance, asking for forgiveness, keeping out of Hell etc. This may have been simply a failure of vocabulary or, more worryingly, a lack of cultural perspective.
- 6** This was generally competently done. The best candidates were aware of the community dimension to the question (*those who live in the city*); organised their response to answer the question (some underlined key words in the question to keep them on track); and gave evidence to support their answer. The instructions clearly asked candidates to use Sources D, E and F and those who did not refer to all three could not get full marks. There were some successful empathetic answers.
- 7** The examiners found the responses to this question a pleasure to read in very many cases. There were some outstanding answers and many candidates demonstrated a lively engagement with the sources. Some candidates should have included more facts derived from the sources, been more analytical and less inclined to simply paraphrase without comment. Some weaker candidates simply repeated their answers from other questions; others retold the story of Medea and Lysistrata without engaging with the content of the sources. Source A was the most popular and visual sources (B and E) the least. In general visual sources provided the most imaginative, insightful and interesting answers. Analyses of B for example pointed out that the women were standing up (work was hard); their heads were covered (modesty) but their garments were patterned (fashion / or perhaps richer women etc); the position of the women suggested that this work might give opportunities for exchange of gossip etc. Candidates seemed to enjoy the relative interpretative freedom that visual sources gave them. Most candidates demonstrated intelligent awareness of source limitations – some enthusiastically refusing to trust anything without much qualification.

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