

CLASSICAL GREEK

Paper 9787/01
Verse Literature

The standard overall was very high – comparable to last year, Examiners would say.

The mean mark was very similar to previous years, but the range was narrower, indicating that, while there were fewer thoroughly excellent papers, there were more extremely good ones and fewer relatively weaker ones.

It was clear that the majority of the candidates knew their texts extremely 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 essays (where an extraordinary amount of relevant detail was recalled by candidates, often with admirable concision).

Examiners think that the difficulty of the paper matched that of the last two years. Of the four Centres, three chose to answer the tragedy questions, only one the Homer. All the candidates chose the Unseen Literary Criticism option rather than the Theme essay. The subtlety of **Question 1 (i)** caused some difficulty, but the candidates' knowledge of the text was sound enough to ensure reasonable marks. The other commentary and translation questions were well handled for the most part. The Unseen Literary Criticism was mainly well answered, especially part **(a)**. Not all the candidates got to grips with the shocking nature of the metaphors in their answers to part **(b)**, but on the whole this question was tackled more successfully than last year.

Question 1

- (i) Good candidates grasped that they were being asked to consider the various contrasts (rhetorically) deployed by Neoptolemus and Odysseus. Such contrasts included: nature/nurture; violence/persuasion; violence/trickery; victory/morality (or honour); words/deeds. The best candidates were able to show how conventional Neoptolemus is and how tricky, by contrast, Odysseus is.
- (ii) The translation was, for the most part, very accurate.
- (iii) There were some good answers here. Candidates commented well on the stress given to Odysseus' seniority; how Odysseus refuses to be drawn in by Neoptolemus' (pleading) questions; how Odysseus invents a third term between language and violence (i.e. tricks); how Odysseus, while firm with Neoptolemus, also calls him *sofo/j* and *a)gaqo/j*.

Question 2

- (i) Most translated lines 1-6 accurately.
- (ii) This question was well answered on the whole. Candidates observed Neoptolemus' embarrassment, and the way that he talks to himself; they also commented on the deliberative question in line 11, and the use of *kako/j* (about Neoptolemus) by both characters.
- (iii) The way in which Philoctetes becomes increasingly upset, and also incredulous, desperate and angry, was well observed. There were some good comments on the language, the use of dialogue and so on. Pleasingly, there was little facile comment about sound effects.

Question 3

- (i) This question was well answered: the emphatic opening, the alliteration (plausibly plosive, this) in line 3, and the vocabulary of fighting were all well observed and commented on.
- (ii) Candidates noted that Agamemnon's tone was hostile and angry and were able to indicate various lines in the passage that revealed this.
- (iii) This was well translated.
- (iv) Most were able to observe that the characterisation showed Achilles – in a few lines – in all his variety: unsure, violent, troubled and so on.

Question 4

- (i) This was mostly well answered. Candidates were well informed about the ritual aspects of supplication, and of Zeus' function as a god of suppliants. Even better were the attempts to bring out the detail of Thetis' appeal: how she addresses Zeus, her appeal to pity and honour, her contrasting descriptions of Achilles and Agamemnon, honour emphasised.
- (ii) This was well translated.
- (iii) Mainly good answers were able to observe a certain inconsistency in Zeus' portrayal; some candidates observed that Zeus – certainly in relation to Hera – seemed rather insecure about his own power, while at the same time being keen to reassert it, and all this after his initial anger.

Question 5

All but one of the candidates who chose this option wrote this essay, and, for the most part, their attempts were good and admirably concise (tragedy seems to produce this effect). All candidates demonstrated an extremely good knowledge of the text and were able to deploy their knowledge in well-constructed arguments. Good use was made of the contrast between Neoptolemus and Odysseus and of the way that Neoptolemus' view of Philoctetes – and the sense of shame he feels before him – is one of the main determinants of the play's action. Some dealt well with the way in which honour can be seen as related to shame.

Question 6

One candidate answered this question, and did so rather well. This candidate was able to demonstrate the centrality of persuasion (or rhetoric) as a theme in the play, and also to see that as a reflection of its importance in fifth-century democratic Athens. The knowledge of the text was good, and well used.

Question 7

This question was attempted by all the Homer candidates, and was well done. Clearly, the key to answering this question is an understanding of the concept of Homeric hero, and most demonstrated that they had understood that well. Arguably, there were some anachronistic observations (because in a contemporary context many of Achilles' attitudes – his selfishness, violence, self-pity, and so on – are so obviously thought to be negative). However, there was still a good knowledge of the text usefully deployed.

Question 8

No candidates attempted this question.

Question 9

All the candidates attempted this question and, for the most part, they did it better than in past years, concentrating on the shocking nature of the imagery and not making spurious claims about how sound effects or enjambement emphasised certain points (though there was still a little bit of that).

- (i) This was especially well done. Clytemnestra's triumphalism, brutality and ruthlessness were all well observed with careful attention to the language. Her self-absorption and assertion were noticed in the large number of first-person verbs.
- (ii) This question was in two parts. The part to do with the first simile was better answered, though there was still – in some answers – an unwillingness to take on board how truly shocking it is to compare the spurting blood of your murder victim over you to the dew that allows crops to grow. The best were able to say – and thereby achieve very high marks – that this passage is an extreme challenge to our aesthetic and moral sensibilities.

The second simile – more sinister, less easy to pin down – was analysed a little more superficially. Again, a contrast between an apparent positive – the ability of wine to alleviate woes – and the evils experienced by Agamemnon was not as sharply commented on as one might expect.

Questions 10-17

There were no theme essays: this was a shame. To study the theme texts is a useful way to deepen candidates' understanding of their set text.

It is pleasing to note that candidates are increasingly – and rightly – seeing that, just because they are studying poetry for this paper, they do not need to concentrate solely on the way poetry uses language, to the exclusion of what the poetry is actually saying.

CLASSICAL GREEK

Paper 9787/02
Prose Literature

Key Messages

The candidates again performed well on this paper. All the Centres chose to study the Thucydides VII text and there was plenty of evidence of good teaching of this material. The general level of the scripts was very good indeed.

General Comments

Candidates again seemed to have little difficulty understanding long passages from the Thucydides text and this enabled them to include plenty of content in their answers. The standard of translation of the set texts was impressive. For the literary questions most candidates showed that they grasped the meaning of the passage in detail and they were able to demonstrate a sound understanding of Thucydides' literary style. Essay questions were usually well done and candidates demonstrated a detailed knowledge of much of Book VII, particularly the sections that were relevant to an analysis of Nicias' character.

Examiners would again remind candidates and Centres of the importance of time management. A very few candidates failed to complete all the questions and this did affect their overall mark. It was pleasing that they were a number of D1 performances on this paper, and candidates and teachers should be congratulated for the high standard of work produced.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

- (i) Answers were generally impressive here and many features listed in the mark scheme were discussed. Most candidates explained how Thucydides effectively portrays the nervous tension of the Athenians and how he uses contrast to emphasise their changing emotions. Some candidates could have included more detail on how Thucydides uses precise description, such as saying that the bodies of the soldiers were swaying in different directions, to create a strong impression.
- (ii) Translations were generally accurate.
- (iii) Again, most answers were good. Candidates usually discussed how Thucydides' main focus is on the disorder of the Athenians as they fled back to their camp. Candidates who dropped marks here generally needed to analyse the Greek text in a bit more detail.

Question 2

- (i) Candidates again demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of this passage. Most discussed the variety of methods the Syracusans used to attack the Athenians and how Thucydides gives us a moving picture of the Athenians' forlorn hope that they might survive if only they can make it to the other side of the river.
- (ii) Most candidates found plenty of relevant things to say about this passage and it was pleasing that a number scored maximum marks. The best candidates discussed Thucydides' attention to details, such as his description of some Athenians being killed by their own weapons and others dying after becoming entangled in their own equipment and swept away by the river. Later on,

many candidates discussed how Thucydides includes the shocking detail that they were even fighting each other over the defiled water.

(iii) Again, translations were generally accurate.

Questions 3 and 4

No candidates attempted these questions.

Question 5

All candidates chose the essay on whether Nicias could be seen as a tragic figure. They all demonstrated a good knowledge of the Thucydides VII text. It was particularly good to see some interesting comparisons between Nicias and characters from Greek tragedy. The quality of argument and analysis was encouraging. The best candidates had clearly thought carefully about the concept of a tragic figure and there were a number of impressive essays. Candidates must make sure they write at sufficient length: a few candidates showed plenty of ability, but their answers did not demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the text to be awarded high marks.

Questions 6, 7 and 8

No candidates attempted these questions.

CLASSICAL GREEK

Paper 9787/03
Unseen Translation

Key Messages

Most candidates performed well on this paper and there were a number of scripts at D1 standard. It may be worth reminding Centres to read a wide variety of Greek authors in their Lower Sixth year, as we will continue to set unseens from a number of different Greek authors. All Centres had some very good candidates and the overall impression was that all Centres had prepared their candidates well for this paper.

General Comments

Compared to last year's paper, candidates found the verse unseen a little easier. However, there were some challenging sections to differentiate the candidates. We were impressed that most candidates had little difficulty with translating a passage of stichomythia rather than a long speech. Some candidates had difficulty with the Xenophon prose unseen, but most showed an impressive knowledge and understanding of Greek vocabulary and grammar on both translations. The best candidates were able to translate both passages accurately and fluently. It was particularly impressive that there were many who were able to score high style marks for their prose unseen translation. It was also pleasing that the scansion was done to a good standard by all candidates.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

Most candidates coped well with the vocabulary and syntax of the Xenophon passage. One possible area for improvement is that candidates could translate the passage into more idiomatic English to gain more style marks.

Οὐκοῦν ... ἀπιστεῖσθαι: most candidates found the first section of this passage reasonably straightforward and translated this section fluently and accurately. A few misunderstood the passive forms of πιστεύεσθαι and ἀπιστεῖσθαι.

ἐγὼ ... ἐκείνους: most candidates made a good start to this section. There were a couple of difficult clauses here (αὐτον ... ἐργάσαιτο, and εἰδώς ... ἐκείνους) that helped to differentiate the candidates. Many candidates understandably struggled to find the correct meaning of ἱκανός. It was, however, pleasing that most candidates understood the general sense of this section, even if there were isolated words they did not know.

καὶ ... πέπραται: the main difficulties in this section were the imperfect passive ἐκελευόμεν, the aorist infinitive ἀποδημῆσαι, and the perfect passive πέπραται. Most candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the grammar here, but sometimes struggled to translate the different clauses into fluent English. Correct literal translations received full marks, but it is always good for candidates to look for opportunities to gain style marks.

ἦδέως ... ἐπιδημεῖν: the main difficulties here were γεγένημα (perfect), and the two different parts of ἀπειλώ. Also, some candidates did not know ἀποδημεῖν and ἐπιδημεῖν.

ὕπανίστανται ... με: this section was meant to be challenging and it did differentiate between the candidates. Many candidates made good attempts to translate ὕπανίστανται and ἐξίστανται, but some did struggle with these verbs. Some candidates could not translate φόρον.

Question 2

- (a) Candidates seemed to find this passage slightly easier than last year's verse; however, it was an unadapted Euripides passage and few words were glossed, so candidates should be congratulated for their good performance on this paper.

Φοίβω ... αἰσχύνεται: candidates generally made a good start, but there were some mistakes made on these first few lines. Some struggled to translate γεγῶσα accurately, while others understandably struggled with the difficult phrase λάθρα πατρός.

οὐ ... φάος: most candidates coped admirably with the challenges in these lines. It was pleasing that nearly everyone translated πέπονθεν correctly. Again, most candidates translated the relative clause in line 7 accurately and many showed a good understanding of compounds of τίθημι in their translation of ἐξέθηκε and ἐκτεθείς.

οὐκ ... τεκμηρίω: again most of the translation on these lines was impressive. The main difficulties were to translate διεφθάρη accurately and to spot that ποίω agreed with τεκμηρίω.

ἐλθοῦσ' ... διαπεπραγμένω: some candidates were confused by ἵνα here (with an indicative), but a pleasing number translated σταλαγμός correctly. ἐπεστράφη was one of the most difficult verbs in the passage and most candidates found this clause challenging.

σοὶ ... ἀθλία: most candidates finished off this passage very well. The most challenging clause in this final section was σοὶ ταύτων ἦβης, ... εἶχ' ἄν μέτρον.

- (b) The scansion was generally done well and candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of the technique of scanning Greek verse.

CLASSICAL GREEK

Paper 9787/04

Prose Composition or Comprehension

The standard was extremely high, if not quite as high as last year. However, the very best piece of Greek prose composition not only demonstrated extremely sound grammatical knowledge; it was also very polished, with appropriate redrafting, subordination, connection. There was also some choice vocabulary: we can safely say that there was much good Greek on display. The candidates who attempted the comprehension were, on the whole, slightly weaker.

Section A

This was extremely well done, as a rule.

First sentence

Translations were mainly accurate. Some found 'because of its difficulties' a little hard to get quite right but, at the same time, there were some ingenious attempts.

Second sentence

'In fact' was not always included, though some tried *kai\ dh/*. Quite a few had the comparative of *pro/qumoj* correct. 'As time passed' was often well translated with a genitive absolute; the final clause, however, caused more difficulty, especially the problem of how to translate the relative clause. The future infinitive of *gi/gnomai* also caused some problems.

Third sentence

Few took the opportunity to make 'his advice was considered excellent' a genitive absolute or a subordinate causal clause (either would seem an obvious thing to do; a couple of candidates agreed). The use of *dh/moj* for 'people' was good.

Fourth sentence

This longish sentence contained three elements or, more precisely, three opinions: that of the older people, of the younger, and of the (ordinary) soldiers. Most did well with the comparatives (older, younger); there were some good attempts at Greek connection: *me/n, de/, kai\ dh/*. The future infinitives – including one in the passive – were for the most part accurate in the first clause of the sentence. In the second clause, quite a few missed the opportunity for a nice *te...kai*. In a number of papers the word for 'places' (*to/poi*) became *tro/poi* ('ways'; 'manners'). In the third clause of the sentence, 'for fighting' caused difficulty (the same applied to 'for adding'). Most simply, an aorist participle would have sufficed, but few saw that the 'to be paid' really needed to be a future passive infinitive.

Final sentence

All candidates knew the syntax of result clauses; there were some ingenious redraftings of 'opposed' (e.g. 'did not want'), as there were of 'unpatriotic'. The Examiner was expecting more to know *filo/polij* and for the more adventurous to try out *miso/polij*.

Section B

Only three candidates attempted this section. In all cases the candidates were able to answer the grammar **Questions (ix – xii)** accurately. The Examiner was especially pleased that **Question x** – about why a participle was plural when its subject was singular – was correctly answered. Where marks were lost, they were lost on the comprehension questions and especially on those comprehension questions that were awarded four or five marks (**i, iii, iv, vii**). **Question vii** – about Lysander sailing into the Peiraeus, the exiles returning, the pulling down of the walls with much enthusiasm accompanied by flute-players - caused particular difficulty.

Candidates clearly had plenty of time to complete the paper. Some of those who attempted the prose composition had written out several versions (as last year).

Prose composition remains an excellent way to differentiate candidates: the best displayed an admirably wide-ranging Greek vocabulary, as well as sound grammatical knowledge. To do this paper very well – as a number of candidates did – shows that you really know your Greek.