

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

H408

For first teaching in 2017

H408/11 Summer 2023 series

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

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Paper 11 series overview

This question paper produced an array of responses and allowed candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding at all different levels. Clearly a considerable amount of care and time had been spent preparing these candidates and their enthusiasm for the subject was evident.

There was a marked improvement in the way that the vast majority of students adopted a comparative approach to Question 7 and anonymous scholarship was virtually outdated in the 30-mark questions.

Candidates would be well advised to comment on the references to modern scholarship which have been dutifully learnt (do they agree/disagree, explain what they think is meant by...).

Timing was also an issue for candidates. It was the first component many would have sat in this session.

Assessment for learning



Greater practice of working under timed conditions would have helped many. This does not need to be whole papers which consumes valuable lesson time. It might just be a question worth 10 or 20 marks.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> made use of the passages on the paper considered both sides of an argument (where relevant) possessed the necessary depth of knowledge and understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> had not practised working under timed conditions or did not complete the paper included irrelevant information were more concerned with modern scholarship than the epics themselves.

Section A overview

Timing was not an issue in this section of the paper and there were many good points made about Helen and Penelope and mortal women in general. Some candidates would have improved their responses by making greater references to the passages or spent less time analysing literary techniques or forcing in references to scholars for the questions worth 20 marks. They are only required for the 30-mark question.

Question 1

1 Explain how Helen is presented in **Passage A**.

Use references to the passage to support your answer.

[10]

The majority of candidates noted that Helen was observant, self-aware and forthright. Some candidates did not look at the whole passage and did not note the change in her behaviour. The best responses showed that her defiance was short-lived. Some candidates relied on material not in the passage. This type of question is primarily a character-based question. It does not require candidates to assess the literary merits of the passage.

Question 2*

2* Explain how a good mortal woman was expected to behave in the *Iliad*.

You may use **Passage A** as a starting point, and your knowledge of the *Iliad* in your answer. [20]

This question was generally well answered. The best responses included material relating to Andromache, Hecuba and Briseis with good, specific references to the text. Candidates are making full use of the passages in the questions worth 20 marks. Candidates who had spotted Helen's obedience did not always capitalise on it and the implications of Aphrodite's disguise were not often used to introduce weaving as a skill expected of good women. However, there were plenty of other clearly expressed points which were well-substantiated by the text as a whole.

Question 3

3 Explain how Penelope is presented in **Passage B**.

Use references to the passage to support your answer.

[10]

Although some candidates did not use the whole of the passage, the majority of responses mentioned her wisdom, beauty, loyalty and obedience. Some candidates noted that Eurymachus' remarks were excessively flattering. The best responses went on to mention her caring side and that she had been entrusted to look after Odysseus' parents.

As with Question 1, this type of question is primarily a character-based question. It does not require candidates to assess the literary merits of the passage.

Question 4*

4* Explain how a good mortal woman was expected to behave in the *Odyssey*.

You may use **Passage B** as a starting point, and your knowledge of the *Odyssey* in your answer.

[20]

Candidates who noted Penelope's modesty in the passage did not always develop it in this question, although there was some good work on Nausicaa asking Odysseus to follow her to the palace. Marriage was considered with respect to Nausicaa, Penelope's loyalty and the relationship between Arete and Alcinous. Weaving was well developed regarding Penelope, Telemachus' instructions to her and to Arete recognising the clothes Odysseus was wearing. Some candidates even noted Penelope questioning the beggar about Odysseus' clothes stressing the domestic expectations of women.

Irrelevancies crept into more responses for this question than any other on the paper. Calypso and Circe are not mortal women, and references to bad mortal women (Helen, Melanthe) need to be made relevant to the question being asked.

Section B overview

Timing was more of an issue in this section with candidates running short or not attempting Question 6. The majority of candidates had been well-versed on how to appreciate the literary merits of Passage C.

Some candidates would have improved their responses by making greater references to the passages or spending less time forcing in references to scholars for the 20-mark questions. They are only required for the questions worth 30 marks.

Question 5

5 Explain why **Passage C** is a memorable piece of writing.

Use references to the passage to support your answer.

[10]

There were candidates who combined Juturna and the Dira although marks were given when the effect on Turnus was considered. 'Memorable' was well used by some candidates who saw it as an opportunity to consider linguistic and rhetorical devices but many simply tagged 'memorable' onto some flat and unmemorable observations. They gained AO1 reward but not AO2 because they did not unpack their observations, especially when discussing the simile. The best responses commented about the ominous nature of the passage (i.e. tombs, empty houses) and the effect this had on the passage.

Question 6*

6* 'Turnus did not deserve to die.'

Explain how far you agree with this statement.

You may use **Passage C** as a starting point, and your knowledge of the *Aeneid* in your answer.

[20]

There was a lot of emphasis on the killing of Pallas and Aeneas' subsequent revenge killing of Turnus. Some candidates recognised that killing happens in war so the death of Pallas per se is just another war killing, but then went on to consider Turnus gloating over the body, the cruelty of his attitude to Evander and his placing his foot on the body. More nuanced responses accepted the seizing of the baldric as a war prize, but went on to say how the prize should have been dedicated to the gods and not kept for personal glory. As to whether Turnus' death was necessary, the jury has been out for centuries but the deliberation of the jury, presented by many candidates were thoughtful, detailed and a pleasure to read. There was good work on the Homeric hero in Turnus being out-dated by the prototype Roman hero in Aeneas. This was often supported by Turnus' attack on the Trojan camp showing how he was only after personal glory, whereas had he opened the gates to let his army in all would have changed.

Section C overview

A large number of candidates did not attempt Question 7. However, the candidates who did, showed a vast improvement in how this was answered. It should be noted that candidates should be using information from the passages and not discussing their characters from the whole of the epics. Some candidates also discussed all three females.

The essay question instruction to support 'with close reference' to the chosen epic was well-observed and most candidates gave detailed evidence for their ideas. Scholarly opinion was often well-handled. Some candidates merely name-dropped. A few responses were compromised for AO2 marks by the absence of scholars.

Question 7

- 7 Discuss who you think shows the greater strength of character, Juturna or Helen/Penelope. You should refer to the passage from the *Aeneid* **and** the passage from the work of Homer you have read. [10]

The majority of candidates who attempted this question had the right technique for this question, making direct comparisons between the two women. However, a surprising number of candidates did not use the passages, but supported their responses with material from other parts of the epics. Some candidates did not have a clear idea of what defines 'strength of character', focussing on strength of feeling or physical strength. Some interpreted the question to refer to Homer and Virgil's ability to present character, i.e. strong characterisation.

Misconception



Candidates should only be using the passages when answering Question 7.

Exemplar 1

7	<p>Helen shows great strength of character</p> <p>Helen can be seen to show greater strength of character than Turtuna as she explicitly opposes Aphrodite and expresses desire to go against her wishes when she says, "I refuse to go and share this man's bed again", whereas Turtuna asks "How can I set myself against such a portent?" showing that she cannot fathom how to align herself in opposition to the Dira and so does nothing to prevent this course of action. In addition, Helen can be seen</p>
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Exemplar 1 illustrates a candidate who has written a response which has successfully adopted a comparative approach to the question.

Question 8*

8* 'Anger (*menis*) is at the heart of the whole of the *Iliad*.'

Explain how far you agree with this statement. Justify your answer with close reference to the *Iliad*. [30]

The majority of candidates were strong on the wrath of Achilles but might have included other relevant examples of anger. Better responses also looked at other themes which could be said to be at the heart of the epic, such as reconciliation or the pursuit of *kleos* and *time*. Many candidates only considered *menis* briefly before unrolling paragraphs on whichever other themes they had revised.

Exemplar 2

		<p> Anger is also, M. Silk explains that 'the heroes quarrels result in destruction and death'. The anger that incites these 'quarrels' does have adverse impacts by inducing death, as Achilles abstaining from battle is leads to Patroclus wearing his armour and taking his place in the war, resulting to in him being killed by Hector, Patroclus' death is a direct consequence of Achilles' anger and so Silk's conclusion emphasises the destructive nature of anger. Hector's </p>
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Exemplar 2 demonstrates a candidate who has successfully incorporated a reference to modern scholarship into their work.

Question 9*

9* 'Odysseus' character is as complex as the plot of the *Odyssey*.'

Explain how far you agree with this statement. Justify your answer with close reference to the *Odyssey*. [30]

Responses to this question often lacked balance and structure. There was a tendency to make Odysseus more complex than he actually is. Some candidates struggled to define what complexity of character looks like. Those who did mention plot often simply re-told it rather than looking at features which made it complex. Many candidates relied on Odysseus in Books 5–12 with little reference to the rest of the epic.

Question 10*

10* Explain why Fate is important in the *Aeneid* **and** discuss the extent to which Fate is influenced by the gods and goddesses. Justify your answer with close reference to the *Aeneid*. **[30]**

Candidates who gave the best responses were the ones who not only used a good range of examples but ensured that their analysis was explicitly linked to the focus of the question. The best examples knew the contextual importance of the Scrolls of Fate/ Pageant of Heroes, although very few students made links to the description of the shield. As with Question 9, not all candidates tackled both halves of the question.

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