

AS LEVEL

Examiners' report

CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

H008

For first teaching in 2017

H008/21 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.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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Paper 21 series overview

The enduring enjoyment of candidates in reading and studying the plays was evident in their responses. It was pleasing to see references to performances of the plays which the candidates had seen, either live or as recordings. Candidates showed good knowledge of the content of the plays. They were able to express opinions about the questions, and use evidence to back up these opinions. The responses showed the personal reaction of the candidates to the plays and the issues they raised.

Finally, legibility and quality of written communication is an issue. This can particularly be seen in the spelling of names and technical terms. Candidates should be advised to read through what they have written to make sure that their work communicates their ideas clearly and effectively.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read the questions carefully • followed the rubric carefully • displayed good examination technique • used both literary and material culture evidence • provided quotations/close reference to the plays • were aware of the historical and social context of the plays • addressed the question directly • came to a conclusion • discussed the plays as pieces of drama, rather than literature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • made little reference to the actual plays in the higher tariff questions • used information which was not relevant to the question • wrote lengthy introductions to some responses, including lower tariff questions • started a response to higher tariff questions with a firm opinion, and then disagreed with their introduction as they continued their response, leading to a confusing argument • used technical terms such as <i>peripeteia</i> and <i>anagnorisis</i> without understanding what they mean.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should be reminded to:

- follow the instructions carefully
- start each 8-, 16- and 25-mark question on a new page of the answer booklet. Very few candidates did this, sometimes not even leaving a gap between responses. This makes it difficult for the examiner to work out where one response ended and the next one began.
- number questions carefully
- write clearly and legibly.

Section A overview

Candidates had good knowledge of the plot and details of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*. The majority of candidates dealt with the pot, but there was evidence that not all were familiar with the background knowledge of the pot.

Question 1

Source A Choregos Vase

Figure 1



1 Identify Figure 1 on the vase in Source A.

[1]

There were candidates who did not identify the figure correctly, or stated that he is a tragic actor.

Assessment for learning



To respond to this type of question, there is no need for candidates to write a full sentence. Time can be saved by writing a one/two-word response. This is the same for Question 2, Question 5, Question 6 and Question 7.

Question 2

- 2 What is the technical name given to the theatrical building shown on the vase in **Source A**? [1]

The majority of candidates responded correctly to this question.

Question 3

- 3 Analyse how useful **Source A** is in telling us about costumes in Greek Comedy at the time of Aristophanes. [8]

Make **four** points and support each point with reference to **Source A**.

This question was answered well. The majority of candidates were able to identify elements of comedic costumes seen on the pot and make valid comments about what they saw. Occasionally, candidates struggled to identify what the pot tells us about comedy, or made comments about Aegisthus, which were not relevant to the question. Some candidates pointed out the usefulness of the pot in contrasting costumes in comedy with those in tragedy. Not many candidates commented on the date and location of the pot.

Exemplar 1

	In comedy
	Source A is useful because it shows the use of bodysuits. The figures shown appear
	to have a type of bodysuit on that lifts at the ankles and wrists. This is important
	as it tells us that bodyhair was hidden (which was hidden so that actors could
	play a range of characters, men and women, old and young).
	Source B is also useful because it shows the use of grotesque masks that
	with particularly large have
	dramatic expressions of and gaping mouths. Compared to the tragic actor on the
	left, whose mask is not as large and has a serious expression, source A highlights the
	difference between the two types of mask and also adds to the comic effect
	Shows that the masks are an important comic element.

Exemplar 1 demonstrates how the candidate has used a good approach to respond to this question, picking out details from the pot and making valid points about them. They included two further paragraphs using the same approach, so scored full marks.

Question 4

Source B

Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* 408–431

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4 Explain why Tiresias mentions that he serves Apollo (line 4). Make **two** points.

[2]

The majority of candidates were able to make two valid points.

Question 5

5 Give the names of Oedipus' mother and father (line 14).

[2]

The majority of candidates responded correctly to this question.

Question 6

6 What is Cithaeron (line 20)?

[1]

The majority of candidates responded correctly to this question.

Question 7

7 Give the name of **one** of Oedipus' children (line 25).

[1]

The majority of candidates gave the name of one of Oedipus' daughters.

Question 8

8 Explain how successfully Sophocles makes the scene in **Source B** an exciting piece of theatrical action.

Make **four** points and support each point with reference to **Source B**.

[8]

The majority of candidates were able to produce a reasonable analysis of the text. Candidates were able to use quotations from the passage and explain how they made the scene an exciting piece of theatrical action. They showed a sound appreciation of different dramatic techniques, such as foreshadowing and dramatic irony, although they did not always appreciate the difference between irony and dramatic irony.

Exemplar 2

	Sophocles makes the scene exciting through the
	use of dramatic irony. We can see this
	when Tiresias says asks, "who are your
	parents?" This is exciting as the audience
	who are familiar with the myth know his wife
	is his mother but Oedipus does not.
	Sophocles makes the scene exciting through his
	building of tension. We can see this when
	Tiresias says, "No man will ever be rooted from
	the earth as brutally as you." This is
	exciting as it leaves the audience anticipating
	a horrific ending for the tragic hero.

Exemplar 2 is a good example of how a candidate has used a clear line of analysis and division between points, explaining why the chosen example makes the passage an exciting piece of theatrical action.

Question 9*

9* Assess how important you think the imagery of sight and blindness is in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*.

You may use **Source B** as a starting point in your answer.

[16]

Candidates were able to discuss how the imagery of sight and blindness was used in the play. The majority of candidates used Source B as a start to their response, but, in some cases, there was very little detail from the rest of the play. Fuller responses did discuss the self-blinding of Oedipus, although not many candidates mentioned his final appearance. There was also some confusion about Oedipus' fate. Many candidates thought that his blindness was part of his fate, rather than being self-inflicted.

There were some good discussions about the ideas of physical and metaphorical sight and blindness, and the contrast between Oedipus and Tiresias. Some candidates also considered being blind to the truth to apply to a range of characters, such as Jocasta, especially as regards to oracles and prophecies.

Misconception



A common misconception is still that the prophecies given to Laius and Jocasta, and to Oedipus were identical. Laius and Jocasta were only told that their son would kill his father.

Exemplar 3

One ~~source~~ argument in favour of sight imagery being important in Oedipus the King is that it is a source of dramatic irony. The audience is aware throughout the play that Oedipus blinds himself ~~de~~ after his anagnorisis of the truth, and therefore every reference to sight or blindness remind the audience of his brutal fate, generating fear and pity - the two emotions Aristotle claimed to be most important in a tragedy. In Source B, this use of sight imagery to invoke dramatic irony is very evident, as Tiresias is ~~referring~~ alluding to Oedipus' future self-blinding without Oedipus realising, and this contributes to how entertaining this scene is.

Exemplar 3 shows a candidate who had a good understanding of the role of the imagery of sight and blindness in creating dramatic irony in the play. This was one of the factors which makes the imagery of sight and blindness important in the play.

Section B overview

Candidates showed good knowledge and understanding of the two plays. In both questions, there was a tendency for conclusions to be quite short and underdeveloped. Some candidates used a plan for their essay, which tended to help with the organisation of the response. There was also a tendency for narrative to be used without linking this to the question. Question 11 was slightly more popular than Question 10.

Question 10*

10* 'The first half of Aristophanes' *Frogs* (Dionysus' travels) is more enjoyable than the second half (the contest between Aeschylus and Euripides).'

Evaluate how far you agree with this statement.

[25]

Assessment for learning



Candidates should appreciate that how enjoyable a Greek comedy is more than just how funny it is. It also encompasses the whole theatrical experience of the audience (not readers).

Candidates were aware of the main details of events within the play. The majority of the responses examined the two halves of the play separately and compared them to each other. Better responses discussed not only the comedy of the play, but also the visual and political aspects which made the play enjoyable.

The first half of the play was mostly discussed in more detail than the second half, which was often limited to mentions of the 'little bottle of oil' and the weighing of the lyrics. The majority of candidates had a good appreciation of the comic techniques used by Aristophanes, but often used terms such as 'scatological humour' or 'slapstick' without understanding what these terms actually meant.

Better responses covered not only the verbal comedy within the play, but also the visual aspects, as well as the political comments. There were also candidates who made a distinction between the experience of a contemporary audience and that of a modern audience.

Misconception



There was a misconception of what exactly the different forms of humour employed by Aristophanes are. For example, sexual innuendo was often described as being scatological, or the costume swapping as slapstick.

Question 11*

11* 'Religion is the most important theme in Euripides' *Bacchae*.'

Evaluate how far you agree with this statement.

[25]

The majority of candidates had a sound knowledge of the play, but often simply told the story without fully linking it to the theme of religion. Candidates were able to comment on the central role of Dionysus within the play as evidence for religion being the most important theme. Fuller responses included discussion of the roles of Tiresias, Cadmus and Agave, and the message of the play that the gods should be respected. In some cases, they also included discussion of the Chorus.

Better responses also picked on the idea of religion being the most important theme and discussed other themes such as family and the presentation of Pentheus as a tyrannical king.

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