

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

CLASSICAL GREEK

J292

For first teaching in 2016

J292/02 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 2 series overview

The Herodotus set text was offered by the great majority of Centres. Candidates clearly enjoyed studying this selection of stories from Histories Book 2, Herodotus' long digression about his travels and research in Egypt. The overall performance of the candidates was very much in line with that of the last 'normal' examination cycle in 2019 and there was little evidence that candidates had struggled to revise the whole prescription. The majority of candidates showed a detailed knowledge of all four stories, understanding the Greek well and offering perceptive literary comment about Herodotus' writing. Many candidates incorporated wider contextual details into their responses, showing a scholarly spirit of enquiry akin to that of Herodotus himself. Teachers are to be commended for preparing the candidates so thoroughly, in spite of the time constraints which tend to affect the delivery of this qualification.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrated detailed knowledge and understanding of the whole prescribed text • supported their responses with accurate Greek quotation, along with translations that matched the Greek quoted • analysed literary style effectively, showing an understanding of context • used their knowledge of the whole text in their response to the final 10-mark question, drawing in evidence from sections of the prescription not printed on the question paper. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did not know the whole text in detail • offered imprecise or impressionistic translations • did not support comments with appropriate Greek quotation or did not match their translations to the exact Greek quoted • did not analyse linguistic or literary features • omitted questions • showed limited knowledge and understanding of the whole text in responding to the final 10-mark question.

Legibility of Scripts

Examiners are increasingly faced with hard to read handwritten scripts, which they make every effort to decipher.

Centres are encouraged to make appropriate access arrangements for candidates likely to be disadvantaged by illegible handwriting. Type written scripts are welcome and indeed, often easier to mark. If the issue of Greek quotation discourages candidates from typing, there are various options to consider as detailed in [this blog](#). The list below is ordered in terms of examiner preference, but candidates should do whatever is easiest and most convenient for them:

- a polytonic Greek keyboard, which can be toggled on and off and allows the typing of diacritical marks (breathings, iota subscripts and accents). Candidates would need to familiarise themselves with the keyboard layout and practice using it in exam conditions.
- the Symbol font in Word for typing Greek quotations without diacritical marks (breathings, iota subscript, accents). Some practice is advised with this too (e.g. terminal sigma ς = SHIFT + v). At this level, candidates will not be penalised for omitting diacritical marks.
- hand-written Greek quotations in the answer booklet, clearly linked to the question answered on a type written response. This is a more time consuming, fiddly format for on screen markers to navigate but examiners will read and mark as 'seen' everything written on a script.

OCR support



To complement this report, exemplars and commentaries on selected questions in this paper will be published by OCR from autumn 2023 on Teach Cambridge. The questions covered will be:

- Question 1(b) (4-mark passage analysis with translation)
- Question 4 (5-mark translation)
- Question 5 (8-mark passage analysis question)
- Question 7 (4-mark passage analysis without translation)
- Question 8 (10-mark essay)

Question 1 (a)

1 Read the passage and answer the questions.

Ψαμμήτιχος δὲ ὡς οὐκ ἐδύνατο πυνθανόμενος πόρον οὐδένα τούτου ἀνευρεῖν, οἱ γένοιτο πρῶτοι ἀνθρώπων, ἐπιτεχνᾶται τοιόνδε. παῖδια δύο νεογνὰ ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἐπιτυχόντων δίδωσι ποιμένι τρέφειν, ἐντειλάμενος μηδένα ἀντίον αὐτῶν μηδεμίαν φωνὴν ἰέναι, ἐν στέγῃ δὲ ἐρήμῃ ἐφ' ἑαυτῶν κεῖσθαι αὐτά, καὶ ἐν ὄρα τὸν ποιμένα ἐπάγειν αὐτοῖς αἴγας, πλήσαντα δὲ τοῦ γάλακτος τᾶλλα διαπράττεσθαι.

5

Translation:

When Psammetichus could not find any way of finding this out, which people had come about first, he devised the following. He gave two new-born children of random people to a shepherd to bring up, instructing that no one was to let out any word in their presence, but they were to lie by themselves in an empty shelter, and from time to time the shepherd was to bring them goats and, having filled them with milk, to sort out everything else.

Tales from Herodotus II (*Psammetichus*) 6–13

(a) Who was Psammetichus?

..... [1]

Question 1 was answered correctly by the majority of candidates.

Question 1 (b)

(b) How does Herodotus' language emphasise the thought and care which Psammetichus takes in carrying out this experiment?

You should make **two** points, each supported by close reference to the Greek.

1

.....

.....

.....

.....

2

.....

.....

.....

.....

[4]

The majority of candidates secured full marks here, selecting two Greek quotations, translating them accurately and including a comment about Herodotus' language. Most candidates knew that they should include a style point in their response to this question, but some still omitted this and therefore did not gain a mark. Teachers are reminded to prepare candidates accordingly.

Since this question is accompanied by an English translation, candidates are expected to be scrupulous in selecting Greek quotations, matching their translation closely to the Greek quoted. It is advisable to adhere to the translation provided on the question paper. Imprecise quotation and translation will weaken what might otherwise be a good point. For example, the repeated negatives μηδένα ... μηδεμίαν were sometimes both translated as 'no one', and the adjective νεογνά ('newborn') was occasionally rendered as 'random'.

Question 2 (a)

2 Read the passage and answer the questions.

τὰ μὲν δὴ πρῶτα ἀκούσας ἤσυχος ἦν ὁ ποιμὴν· ὡς δὲ πολλάκις φοιτῶντι αὐτῷ καὶ ἐπιμελομένῳ πολὺ ἦν τοῦτο τὸ ἔπος, οὕτω δὴ σημήνας τῷ δεσπότη ἤγαγε τὰ παιδιά εἰς ὄψιν τὴν ἐκείνου. ἀκούσας δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Ψαμμήτιχος, ἐπυνθάνετο οἵτινες ἀνθρώπων ἕκός τι καλοῦσι.

Tales from Herodotus II (*Psammetichus*) 19–24

(a) τὰ μὲν ... ἤσυχος ἦν ὁ ποιμὴν (line 1): why do you think the shepherd kept quiet at first?

.....
.....
..... [2]

For Question 2(a), candidates needed to show understanding of the start of the lemma (τὰ μὲν δὴ πρῶτα ἀκούσας ἤσυχος) to indicate that the shepherd had heard the babies saying something. Candidates who did this, and then offered an opinion about why he was silent as a result, earned 2 marks. The majority of candidates, however, did not make the context clear. Examiners accepted a range of personal opinions, including responses which interpreted the shepherd’s ‘silence’ as directed towards the babies, rather than Psammetichus, because he did not want to undermine the experiment.

Question 2 (b)

(b) ὡς δὲ πολλάκις ... τοῦτο τὸ ἔπος (lines 1–2): why did he decide to break his silence?

.....
.....
..... [2]

The majority of candidates, who paid close attention to the lemma, responded well. Candidates needed to show understanding of both *πολλάκις* and *πολὺ* in order to secure both available marks.

Question 2 (c)

(c) ἐπυνθάνετο οἵτινες ἀνθρώπων 'βεκόσ' τι καλοῦσι (line 4): what did Psammetichus enquire about?

..... [1]

Question 2(c) was answered correctly by the majority of candidates.

Question 2 (d) (i) and (ii)

(d) (i) What did he learn in response to his enquiry?

.....
..... [1]

(ii) What conclusion did he reach as a result?

.....
..... [1]

Candidates easily secured a mark for each of these context questions Question 2(d)(i) and Question 2(d)(ii), which relate to the Greek after the passage printed on the question paper. Some candidates wrote about Phoenicians 'vel sim' rather than Phrygians in response to both questions. Such responses were not penalised twice.

Question 3 (a)

3 Read the passage and answer the questions.

οἱ δὲ περὶ Ἐλεφαντίνην πόλιν οἰκοῦντες καὶ ἐσθίουσιν αὐτούς, οὐχ ἡγούμενοι ἱερούς εἶναι. ἄγραι δὲ αὐτῶν πολλαὶ καθεστήκασι καὶ παντοῖαι· ἡ δ' ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ ἀξιωτάτη ἀφηγήσεως εἶναι ταύτην γράφω.

Tales from Herodotus III (*Crocodiles*) 10–13

(a) οἱ δὲ ... εἶναι (lines 1–2): what details in this sentence mark a contrast with what has gone before? Make **two** points.

1

.....

2

.....

[2]

The strongest responses selected two details from the lemma to earn 2 marks here. Some responses, however, did not include enough information, quoting δὲ or οὐχ in isolation and neglecting to translate the wider phrase in which these are used. Candidates who highlighted the word καὶ ‘actually’, earned marks if they made it clear that this emphasises the detail that some Egyptians eat crocodiles, but on its own the word did not suffice. Many candidates supported their points with Greek quotations, although these were not a requirement of the question. Incorrect Greek quotation was therefore not penalised.

Exemplar 1


1 ...The use of 'δε' meaning 'but' to show the immediate contrast in the treatment of the crocodiles

2 ...The use of 'ουχ' meaning 'not' to show how the contrast is direct to how the people around Thebes and Lake Moeris treat them

[2]

Exemplar 1 demonstrates a response that was not given any marks because it does not extract sufficient detail from the lemma. More English and less Greek would have improved this response: e.g. ‘But those living around Elephantine...’ and ‘do not consider crocodiles sacred’.

Assessment for learning



Candidates are encouraged to pay close attention to the wording of the question. Here, the word ‘details’, rather than ‘features’, is inviting a comment on the factual content of the lemma and requires attention to ‘what’ Herodotus is saying rather than ‘how’ he says it.

Question 3 (b)

(b) ἄγραι δὲ ... ταύτην γράφω (lines 2–3): how does Herodotus suggest that he has been selective in choosing what to record? Make **two** points.

1

.....

2

.....

[2]

Although the majority of candidates earned 2 marks for this question, a sizeable number did not mention 'hunting', in the context of the 'many various methods' cited by Herodotus, and therefore did not gain full marks for the question.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should spell out their understanding of the Greek and not assume knowledge in the examiner. Careful use of the Greek lemma is advised here, for example, the first word of the sentence, ἄγραι (hunting [methods]), should be translated.

Question 4

4 Read the passage and answer the question.

ἐπακούσας δὲ τῆς φωνῆς ὁ κροκόδειλος ἵεται κατὰ τὴν φωνήν· ἐντυχῶν δὲ τῷ
νώτῳ καταπίνει, οἱ δὲ ἔλκουσι. ἐπειδὴν δὲ ἐξελευσθῆ εἰς γῆν, πρῶτον ἀπάντων
ὁ θηρευτῆς πηλῶ κατέπλασεν αὐτοῦ τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς.

Tales from Herodotus III (*Crocodiles*) 16–20

Translate this passage into English.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
..... [5]

Candidates responded very well to this translation question, often earning full marks. Examiners exercised some flexibility, accepting ‘squeal’ for φωνήν, for example, and literal translations (‘whenever’ for ἐπειδὴν and ‘plastered’ for κατέπλασεν over the more idiomatic ‘when’ and ‘plasters’). There were candidates who continued their translation beyond the end of the printed passage. Such responses incurred an additional ‘more serious error’. Other common mistakes were:

- omission of the phrase ἐντυχῶν δὲ τῷ νώτῳ
- confusion over the two uses of ἔλκω (ἔλκουσι... ἐξελευσθῆ)
- omission of the conjunction δὲ (in οἱ δὲ ἔλκουσι) connecting the two finite verbs
- omission of ἀπάντων (very common: penalised as an inconsequential error)
- οἱ δὲ ἔλκουσι singular for plural and ὁ θηρευτῆς... κατέπλασεν plural for singular (both penalised as inconsequential)
- making the crocodile the subject of ἔλκουσι (more serious error)

Note that a single more serious error + a single inconsequential error in an otherwise correct translation cannot earn more than 3 marks.

Exemplar 2

Hearing the squeals of the pig the crocodile makes for the sound.
 It meeks the bait, which it swallows, the hunters pull the line.
 Once it has been pulled ashore, first the hunters smear its eyes
 with mud.

In Exemplar 2, the translation, which has three inconsequential errors. It illustrates several of the points highlighted above:

- 'squeals of the pig', 'which' and 'the line' were not penalised
- omission of δὲ (which makes the second sentence ungrammatical)
- omission of ἀπάντων
- ὁ θηρευτῆς ... κατέπλασεν plural for singular.

Misconception



The verb κατέπλασεν, although aorist in form, should be translated as 'plasters' rather than 'plastered', since it is a gnomic aorist, representing a habitual action.

OCR support



The Bloomsbury produced and OCR endorsed *Anthology for Classical Greek GCSE* has a running vocabulary for each of the GCSE prescribed set texts. On page 127 the verb καταπλάττω is glossed with the following explanation: 'the aorist here suggests what traditionally happens (gnomic use)'.

Question 5*

5* Read the passage and answer the question.

ἦλθεν αὐτῷ μαντεῖον ἐκ Βουτουῦς πόλεως, ὡς μέλλοι ἐξ ἔτη μόνον βιοῦς τῷ ἐβδόμῳ τελευτήσῃν. ὁ δὲ δεινὸν ποιησάμενος ἔπεμψεν εἰς τὸ μαντεῖον τῷ θεῷ ὀνειδισμα, ἀντιμεμφόμενος τάδε, 'ὁ μὲν πατήρ ἐμοῦ καὶ πάτρως, ἀποκλείσαντες τὰ ἱερά, καὶ θεῶν οὐ μεμνημένοι ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους φθείροντες, ἐβίωσαν ἐπὶ πολὺν χρόνον· ἐγὼ δ' εὐσεβῆς ὢν μέλλω ταχέως οὕτω τελευτήσῃν.'

5

Tales from Herodotus IV (*Mycerinus*) 8–15

In this passage, how does Herodotus show that Mycerinus considered his fate unfair?

In your answer you may wish to consider:

- how Mycerinus reacted to the oracle's message
- the tone of Mycerinus' reply to the oracle

You must refer to the **Greek** and discuss Herodotus' use of language.

[8]

There were some very good responses here and the majority of candidates reached Level 3 or Level 4. The strongest responses made full use of the passage, selecting appropriate Greek quotations, translating those quotations accurately, and commenting on Herodotus' use of language, which is well evidenced in this passage. Note that one such 'style' point is required to access Level 3 and two are needed for Level 4. Good responses without any linguistic commentary were therefore limited to Level 2 (i.e. maximum 4/8). Less successful candidates lost marks for other reasons too, relying on single word quotations and assuming knowledge in the examiner, quoting the Greek but not translating, or not matching their translation to the words quoted. For example, the word *μόνον* ('only') was sometimes quoted in isolation to illustrate how Herodotus emphasises the harshness of Mycerinus' fate, but the details of that fate were not explained.

The majority of candidates, however, knew the text in detail and peppered their responses with literary critical terminology (not always appropriately deployed, but examiners do not expect use of sophisticated literary terms at this level). There were excellent comments about, for example, the word choice in *ὀνειδισμα, ἀντιμεμφόμενος* that expresses the boldness of Mycerinus' reply to the oracle, the three participial phrases (*ἀποκλείσαντες... μεμνημένοι... φθείροντες*) that list the reprehensible behaviour of Mycerinus' predecessors; and the indignant tone of the contrast he draws between their long life and his truncated one (*ἐβίωσαν ἐπὶ πολὺν χρόνον... μέλλω ταχέως οὕτω τελευτήσῃν*). It was evident that candidates had been very well prepared by their teachers.

Exemplar 3

Furthermore, Herodotus uses polysyndeton when Mycerinus describes all the wrongdoings of his father and uncle to emphasise their injustice in comparison to himself and how undeserving of long life they were. Herodotus writes 'καὶ...καὶ' (and...and) to emphasise the number of evils they performed: they shut the temples; they were not mindful of the gods; they destroyed men. This polysyndeton highlights the injustice Mycerinus feels as he has been pious and faithful and feels as though he deserves a long life.

Exemplar 3 illustrates part of a Level 3 response which had several strengths but also some shortcomings. This well-structured, legibly written response addressed the question, showed a secure understanding of the passage and included several good style points. The selected paragraph (the second of four) is weakened, however, by the limited Greek quotation. The only word quoted is καὶ and its repetition in this context is not illustrative of polysyndeton. A fuller Greek quotation to support the point about 'the evil deeds' of Mycerinus' predecessors would have strengthened the point made. The response was located at the top of Level 3.

Misconception



The use of καὶ in 'καὶ θεῶν οὐ μεμνημένοι ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους φθείροντες' is worthy of comment, although not as an example of polysyndeton. In the phrase ἀλλὰ καὶ ('but actually') the word is used not as a conjunction but to emphasise the detail that Mycerinus' predecessors 'actually destroyed their people'.

Examiners often see a similarly loose use of 'juxtaposition', when 'antithesis' or simply 'contrast' would be more appropriate.

Assessment for learning



In preparing candidates for the 8-mark passage analysis question, teachers are encouraged to emphasise the characteristics of a Level 4 response. Candidates should:

- use the full passage, aiming to make at least four points, each supported by Greek quotation, ideally of more than a single word
- translate any Greek quoted, or make it clear that the meaning is understood
- include at least two comments about the author's use of language
- show an understanding of context and not assume knowledge in the examiner.

The bullet points in the question are intended as a steer and do not necessarily dictate the structure of the response.

Question 6 (a)

6 Read the passage and answer the questions.

ὁ δὲ Ἐτέαρχος ἔφη ἐλθεῖν ποτε παρ' ἑαυτὸν Νασαμῶνας ἄνδρας, οἳ ἐρωτώμενοι εἴ τι ἔχουσι πλέον λέγειν περὶ τῶν ἐρήμων τῆς Λιβύης, ἔφασαν παρ' ἑαυτοῖς γενέσθαι ἀνδρῶν δυναστῶν παῖδας ὑβριστάς, οἳ ἄλλα τε μηχανῶντο ἀνδρωθέντας περιτὰ καὶ δὴ καὶ ἀποκληρώσειαν πέντε ἑαυτῶν ὀψομένους τὰ ἔρημα τῆς Λιβύης.

5

Tales from Herodotus XV(A) (*Pygmies*) 9–15

(a) Of which people was Etearchus king?

..... [1]

In spite of the distraction of the 'Nasamonians' in the first line of this passage, the majority of candidates correctly named Etearchus' people as 'the Ammonians'.

Question 6 (b)

(b) ἐρωτώμενοι ... περὶ τῶν ἐρήμων τῆς Λιβύης (line 2): what information did he seek from the Nasamonians?

.....
 [1]

The majority of candidates earned the mark here, but candidates who omitted Libya/Africa or who made the deserts singular did not.

Question 6 (c) (i)

(c) ἔφασαν ... Λιβύης (lines 2–5):

- (i) pick out and translate a **two-word Greek phrase** which describes the young Nasamonian aristocrats.

Greek phrase:
English translation:

[2]

The majority of candidates correctly selected παῖδας ὑβριστάς ('arrogant sons'), to earn 2 marks. Since the question stem stipulated a two-word phrase, a longer phrase or a single word would not be given marks, even if correctly translated. Examiners accepted a range of translations for ὑβριστάς (e.g. 'insolent') but did not allow 'young men' for παῖδας.

Question 6 (c) (ii)

- (ii) what are we told here about the initiation rites of these young men?

.....

.....

.....

..... [3]

This comprehension question was well handled by the majority of students achieving 2 or 3 marks. The most common reason for losing a mark was omission of the detail that the young men's initiation rites were strange/excessive (περιττά).

Question 7

7 Read the passage and answer the question.

οἱ οὖν νεανίαι, ὡς ἔφασαν οἱ Νασαμῶνες, ἀποπεμπόμενοι ὑπὸ τῶν ἡλίκων, ὕδατί τε καὶ σιτίοις εὖ ἐξηρτυμένοι, ἦσαν πρῶτον μὲν διὰ τῆς οἰκουμένης· ταύτην δὲ διεξελθόντες εἰς τὴν θηριώδη ἀφίκοντο, ἐκ δὲ ταύτης τὴν ἔρημον διεξῆσαν, τὴν ὁδὸν ποιούμενοι πρὸς ζέφυρον ἄνεμον.

Tales from Herodotus XV(A) (*Pygmies*) 22–27

How does Herodotus create a sense of adventure in this passage?

You should make **two** points, each supported by close reference to the Greek.

1

.....

.....

.....

.....

2

.....

.....

.....

[4]

Candidates who made two good content points here, supported by Greek quotation and translation, achieved full marks. Sparse quotations or inaccurate translations were liable to reduce marks. For example, points relying on the single word πρῶτον (first), which ‘shows a sense of adventure because it implies that there will be other parts of the journey to come’ were judged weak.

Although linguistic points are not expected when the question is not accompanied by an English translation, a number of responses included valid stylistic points. Many picked out the polyptoton of the compound verb διεξέρχομαι, and the use of εὖ in the phrase εὖ ἐξηρτυμένοι (‘well equipped’) gave perceptive comments. There were some lovely responses about the exotic image of the young men travelling into the west wind and their transition from civilised to remoter areas. Candidates seemed to admire these pioneering adventurers.

Question 8*

8* Herodotus writes that his Egyptian stories are 'for the benefit of whoever believes such tales'.

Do you think we need to believe his stories in order to enjoy his writing?

You should support your answer with a range of references to the texts you have read, and you may include passages printed on the question paper. **[10]**

There were many impressive and mature responses to this final essay question with the majority of candidates gaining Level 4 or Level 5 marks. The strongest responses displayed a detailed knowledge of the whole text, supporting their arguments with well-chosen examples from all four sections of the prescription and drawing in plenty of extra evidence from sections not printed on the question paper. Some candidates even referred to sections of Book 2 outside the prescribed text, mentioning, for example, the alternative (rather gruesome) version Herodotus records of Psammetichus' 'experiment' to determine the world's earliest language. Candidates were aware of how this experiment influenced later thinkers and has been repeated over the centuries. Equally, there were good arguments about how this story is too disturbing to believe, and if we did believe it, it would reduce the enjoyment.

Most candidates argued the case for both sides of the question and concluded with the sensible view that lack of credibility need not interfere with our enjoyment of Herodotus' tales. These responses were supported by detailed reference to the text, illustrating how the description of teamwork in the crocodile hunting episode, for example, or the pathos in the story of Mycerinus contribute to an enjoyable narrative without requiring the reader to accept it all as true. On the other hand, some candidates seemed to be confused by attempting to argue that if the oracle or Pygmies stories weren't true, then there could be no enjoyment in them at all.

The majority of candidates wrote well with clear topic sentences and well-developed argument, managing their time successfully to include an introduction and conclusion too. All these features are rewarded under AO3. An example of an effective introductory sentence was: 'I do not think we need to believe his stories to enjoy his writing, just as we don't need to believe what happens in a film to enjoy the film'. Responses which referred to only two of the four prescribed sections were limited to Level 4 (i.e. maximum 8 marks), but such responses were rarely seen. A more common feature of lower level responses was a lack of detailed supporting evidence. General references to 'Psammetichus' experiment' or 'the varied treatment of crocodiles' were unlikely to gain a mark above Level 3.

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