



GCE

Classics: Classical Civilisation

Advanced GCE **H441**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **H041**

OCR Report to Centres June 2017

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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F381 Archaeology: Mycenae and the Classical World

General Comments:

There was a marked improvement at the top end of the mark range this year with candidates displaying more than a 'shopping list' knowledge of the material. Such candidates were able to cite relevant examples and give details about them, whilst making the material relevant to the chosen question. At the lower end of the mark range there were some much weaker performances. Even here, however, candidates did show some knowledge of different elements of the content of the specification, but they often struggled to use that knowledge to formulate a response to the questions posed.

There were no rubric errors reported this year, though some candidates physically did not write enough to gain many marks. Examiners felt that candidates used their time appropriately and there was little, if any, evidence of unfinished responses. This year the quality of written communication was noticeably weaker than in previous years, especially the spelling of technical terminology, and the same was true of the general legibility of scripts.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A

Q1(a)

Though the photograph was labelled 'The tomb of Clytemnestra', many candidates referred to the Treasury of Atreus in their answers. The question required knowledge of how this type of tomb was built and how it was decorated. Many lost marks by not covering both these requirements in their answers. This question offered an ideal opportunity to make use of diagrams to explain how the tomb was constructed. Examiners reported that only a handful of candidates used diagrams.

Q1(b)

This question on how useful tombs are in teaching us about Mycenaean society produced some very thoughtful responses. The best answers were able to use a variety of tombs across the whole of Mycenaean society and make some sensibly deductions. Others, however, homed in on the name 'Clytemnestra' and used their knowledge of the Greek tragedies they had read to make assumptions about the opulent finds in her tomb and what these might tell us. This kind of question requires recognisable, detailed material from specific sites in order to gain high AO1 marks.

Q1(c)

There were some lively and interesting discussions about whether the tombs would have been the most impressive structures in Mycenae. Those who wrote only about the tholos tombs left themselves little scope to produce a good argument based on detailed knowledge of structures from Mycenaean sites. The best responses had details about the Cyclopaean walls, the Lion Gateway, the megaron and other structures. Opinions varied as to which structures candidates considered the most impressive.

Q2(a)

The question on the Great Goddess ring and religion was significantly less popular than Question 1 and the marks were often a little lower than those awarded for Question 1. Some candidates had clearly never seen the Great Goddess ring before and this led to some very strange interpretations of what they could see depicted on the ring. As with Q1(a) candidates had to

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tackle both elements of the question to score highly and despite the instruction that the response had to include a comment on the ring, many simply ignored it.

Q2(b)

The question about religious buildings and temples as evidence for ancient religious beliefs and practices was not well done on the whole and many struggled to find suitable material to create a balanced argument. Many answers tended to be about wall-paintings from Mycenaean sites.

Q2(c)

This was an open question which enabled candidates to make use of a wide range of knowledge about different types of sites. Knowledge of other types of site tended to be stronger than knowledge of religious sites which meant that the majority of candidates disagreed with the quotation. Responses which presented a balance of material from both religious and other sites tended to produce more successful arguments.

Section B**Q3**

Although the question about aerial photography and geophysical survey was not the most popular of the essay questions, it did generate the best overall marks for both AO1 and AO2. The candidates tended to be quite knowledgeable about how aerial photography and geophysical survey can be employed to discover sites, and many were able to cite specific examples of sites where these methods had been used. Time Team often played a large, and generally useful, part in the answers to this question. Overall, it was candidates' knowledge of excavation methods and their ability to assess the advantages and disadvantages of excavation over prospecting which proved to be the discriminating factor. There were some impassioned defences of the worth of excavation, but there were some equally strong criticisms of excavation, with some stating that excavation should be left for future generations.

Q4

The essay about whether excavated finds can tell us more about warfare than archaeological sites was remarkably unpopular. Candidates seemed to find it difficult to find suitable material for both sites and finds, and both the Mycenaean world and the Classical world. The best response took time to make a brief box-type plan to order the points to be made and to facilitate the argument. Candidates tended to know more about relevant finds and sites from the Mycenaean world rather than the Classical world, though those who could draw on their knowledge of Roman forts or Hadrian's wall tended to fare quite well.

Q5

'Archaeology only tells us about rich people.' This was the most popular of the essay questions by some distance, but it did not always produce the best answers and the best marks. Few candidates read the question and the supporting bullet points carefully enough. The bullets were carefully worded to say 'including those who were rich, and those who were not rich', in order to give candidates sufficient material on which to base their response. Many were tempted to turn the question around and concentrate their answers on 'the poor', but then struggled to find much in the way of evidence about the poor other than slaves. For those who had studied the site of Pompeii there was a great deal of material available for use to cover both those who were rich, and those who were not rich. Some struggled with what 'rich' might mean and took it to mean only those at the top of the ruling class – a king or an emperor – and therefore they were limited in their selection of material. The best responses defined their terms at the beginning before going on to cite specific examples from specific sites. This was an essay which would have benefitted from forming a brief plan before undertaking the writing of the answer.

F382 Homer's *Odyssey* and Society

General Comments:

As ever, candidates were on the whole very well prepared for the examination and so very weak responses were rare. Perhaps this was unsurprising given the duration of time this unit has now been delivered in the classroom. There were very few rubric errors this year and the candidates' enjoyment of the epic was manifest. It is becoming increasingly popular for candidates to begin with the essay and work backwards through the paper. While they are perfectly entitled to do this as they seek to deal with the high tariff questions first, they must also recognise that the 10 marks for pure recall in questions 1(a) and 2(a) can make a significant difference to the overall Level they achieve and rushed, skimpy responses to the (a) questions can attract fewer marks than might be wished for. The most popular combination of questions was 2 and 3 although it was encouraging to note that as many candidates tackled question 5 as did question 4.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

Section A

Q1(a)

There were many full and detailed responses to this question which achieved an admirable balance of detail to both parts of the question. Weaker responses tended to struggle to offer precise details on either what Circe had told Odysseus to do to allow him to speak to the dead or Teiresias' instructions.

Q1(b)

It should be remembered that relevant quotations in themselves might gain AO1 credit but failure to unpack them and comment on effect will tend to compromise the AO2 mark. Some candidates inadvertently ascribed what Odysseus said to Agamemnon. Many responses might have made more on Agamemnon's attempts both to lump all women together and also to single out Penelope as exceptional. A question that uses the wording 'To what extent...' requires a counter-argument to achieve a top level. There was some very good work on this, however, showing how Agamemnon's fate and cynicism affects the way in which Odysseus deals with Penelope on his return.

Q1(c)

The heroes tended to be listed and their actions cited, especially when dealing with the earlier books of the *Odyssey*. AO1 was, on the whole, generally secure although stronger responses made considerable reference to Book 11 as well. Unfortunately, there was often not enough exploration as to what the different heroes contribute to the *Odyssey*. Candidates did not stress enough what the audience learns from them and how their actions impinge upon events in *Odyssey*. There was also no need for candidates to offer a counter-argument and a surprising number spent valuable time doing so.

Q2(a)

There were many detailed and impressive responses to this question. Impressively, very few candidates wasted time writing about events before Odysseus strings the bow and many managed to offer considerable detail on what had taken place just before the start of the passage, especially when Telemachus intercedes on behalf of Phemius and Medon. Athene's intervention, however, was not always apparent.

Q2(b)

The majority of candidates had clearly been well prepared for this type of question and there were many responses which made detailed reference to the whole of the passage and analysed both what happens and the way these events are narrated. Weaker responses tended to overlook this guidance which was given in the question. It is not enough to offer a relevant quotation and just tack on “and this makes it vivid”. Quotations, especially those involving similes, need to be explored fully and the effect of the writing must also be considered.

Q2(c)

There were many good responses, especially to the first part of this question. Candidates could cite the crimes of the Suitors in some detail and their abuse of *xenia* was underlined by quick and effective comparisons to examples of good *xenia*. The overall knowledge of the Suitors’ misdemeanours was impressive.

Many responses might, however, have spent more time on the second half of the question; it was, on a surprising number of occasions, completely overlooked. Whilst the involvement of both Athene and Zeus was largely dealt with in a satisfactory manner, there was generally not enough consideration of omens, though the candidates who did address omens did so with thorough knowledge of the omens and their significance. Many responses would have also benefited from considering Odysseus’ own actions in bringing about the downfall of the Suitors.

Section B**Q3**

Responses to this popular question were generally well done, though in some answers there was a tendency to include much listing of events with little interpretation. This naturally affected the AO2 mark. Those achieving a Level 5 often avoided focusing solely upon Odysseus’ wanderings but also analysed his actions in Ithaca. Stronger candidates also tended to consider the hero’s piety. The question, however, involved more than discussing whether the candidate considered Odysseus to be a good leader of his men or not.

Q4

There were many full and conceptualised responses to this question. Indeed, candidates who chose this question were, in most cases, extremely well informed about the importance of family in the Classical world. It was also particularly pleasing to observe the breadth of example in many responses; they were not restricted to Odysseus and his family but also made reference to Nestor, Menelaus, Alcinous etc. As ever, some candidates conflated events in the tragedies they have studied with events in the *Odyssey*.

Q5

This was a more popular Question 5 than in the past, and also elicited some outstanding work by candidates who considered action, romance, setting and characterisation. The length of the *Odyssey* was intelligently dealt with and there was much made about editing and abridgement or sensible comment about three-part films and TV mini-series. There were some excellent comments on location by candidates who saw how the more natural, romantic setting of Ogygia lends itself to film as does the other-worldly setting of Scherie. Credit was given to those who made reference and compared the epic to actual films either concerning the Classical world or to other epic productions such as Harry Potter, The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit.

On the whole, it was a real joy to read responses to this question although candidates should be mindful that the focus of the response to questions of this type needs to be on the *Odyssey* itself.

F383 Roman Society and Thought

General Comments

Candidates generally exhibited a sound knowledge of the prescribed texts and good knowledge of Roman society. There were very few rubric errors and omissions this year. Most candidates completed all questions within the allocated time. As in previous years, misspellings of common names such "Domition" and "Aria" and technical terms such as "emperer" were evident.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A – Commentary Questions

Question 1 (Juvenal) was significantly less popular than Question 2 (Pliny).

Q1(a)

Some candidates identified "Caesar" as Domitian, but a few thought this was a reference to Julius Caesar. Most candidates were able to describe the problem Domitian had, but were less confident on the detail of what had already been done to try to solve it. Some confused Crispinus' mullet with Domitian's turbot.

Q1(b)

Many candidates made good use of the passage, using a range of accurate and relevant quotation. Analysis was, for the most part, well focussed on Juvenal's dislike of emperors. There was some confusion over the identity of the "he" in line 7 (Montanus not Domitian). Analysis of the specific *language* features used by Juvenal ("the way he writes it") was required for the highest level of performance. This was lacking in some answers. Some candidates merely provided a commentary of the general meaning of the content. A few candidates did not link their answer closely to the passage and provided few, if any, quotations from it.

Q1(c)

This question required candidates to assess how typical Satire 4 was of the style and approach of the other prescribed satires. Some candidates limited their marks by simply summarising the content of each satire without identifying features that were typical or not. Better answers spotted that the mock epic style and more direct approach to its criticism made it dissimilar, providing a counterargument to the obvious similarities to Satires 1 and 3 such as anger and invective, and use of personae.

Q2(a)

Most candidates were able to provide the name of Pliny's wife and some provided detailed information on her background as well. Most candidates were able to provide enough detail on how a Roman marriage was arranged to score highly. Some candidates were also able to provide excellent detail of the elements of the ceremony itself and the different types of marital arrangements recognised in Roman times. Some candidates were less sure of the ceremony element of the question.

Q2(b)

Most candidates made good use of the passage, using a range of accurate and relevant quotation. Stronger responses analysed why the qualities identified would make the marriage successful. Analysis of the specific *language* features used by Pliny ("the way he says it") was required for the highest level of performance. A very few candidates did not link their answer closely to the passage and provided few, if any, quotations from it.

Q2(c)

There were some excellent answers to this question and candidates supplied detailed evidence and a wide range of examples in support. Better answers analysed both "influential" and "appreciated" as separate elements and saw that while women were often appreciated, they were less often influential. Some candidates focussed their analysis with success on the fact that the women in Pliny's letters were only appreciated in relation to devotion to their men and their place in the home. Weaker answers only provided a one-sided view (women were neither appreciated nor influential). The wording "how far do you agree" required a counterargument which was lacking from some answers, limiting marks. Some weaker answers focussed their answer on the passage as evidence.

Section B – Essay Questions**Q3**

This question was the least popular of the three options. While many candidates could provide a range of detail from each satire and understood Horace's approach/message in each (his "truth"), few were able to focus their answer effectively on the part played by humour. Many found the only example of humour was the dinner party (falling awning, guests leaving) of 2.8 and thus were limited in their range of material for this part of their argument. However, several answers provided a good range of techniques other than humour to fill this gap. Most candidates who answered this question showed a good understanding of Horace's philosophical interests and used this to good effect.

Q4

This question required candidates to assess how "interesting and rewarding" a read is Petronius' *Dinner with Trimalchio*. Candidates mostly focussed on the "interesting" elements of *Dinner with Trimalchio*. "Rewarding" was often limited to what the reader could learn about Roman Society from the text. The interpretation of "interesting" was broad, and included humorous, satirical, the nature of freedmen and women and the lampooning of Nero. Some interpreted the reverse (uninteresting/unrewarding) as when the dinner party went wrong (falling acrobats, disagreements etc). Weaker answers simply listed "interesting" material from the work rather providing analysis of why this was interesting. The wording "explain how far do you agree" required a counter argument which was lacking from some answers, limiting marks.

Q5

This was a very popular question. AO1 marks were available by providing both evidence from the texts and knowledge of the role of wealth in terms of class and status in Roman Society. A high number of candidates used a very wide range of writers effectively as evidence to support their analysis. The question required candidates to judge "which of the writers depicts the negative effects of wealth most successfully". Some weaker answers did not give enough focus to this element of the question, choosing instead to simply list the negative effects of each writer rather than to analyse why one writer was more successful than another. However, there were some excellent answers to this question, covering all 4 writers in some detail and weighing up each writer's approach to wealth. Most candidates were able to provide detailed material from at least two writers.

F384 Greek Tragedy in its Context

General Comments:

Greek Tragedy maintained its popularity amongst the candidates. They once again demonstrated their enjoyment of the plays, and had a good personal reaction to the issues raised by the questions. Candidates seemed to have gained more confidence and knowledge of the plays. The usual problems remained from previous years – Aegisthus, Aegeus, Aeolus, Aetes were interchangeable throughout plays, and spellings of the Classical names seemed worse than in previous years. This also applied to technical terms, especially *stichomythia*.

Legibility and quality of written communication have continued to deteriorate. Candidates should be advised to read through what they have written to ensure that their work communicates their ideas accurately and effectively. Most candidates still did not start the answer to each question on a new page, despite the instruction on the front of the examination paper.

Of the questions, Question 1 was the more popular of the commentary questions, while by far the most popular essay was the question on *Medea*, followed by the essay on *Agamemnon*.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A

Q1(a)

This question was generally well done. Most candidates were aware of the main details of the events. However, many started with entry of sentry, not discussing the conversation between Creon and the Chorus, or did not deal with confrontation between Antigone and Creon in much detail. Ismene was also considered by some candidates to have entered voluntarily, rather than being sent for by Creon.

Q1(b)

Most candidates concentrated on the interaction between the characters; Ismene's desperation, Antigone's answers and Creon's intervention, and the effect these had on the audience. Many did not mention linguistic devices such as *stichomythia*, rhetorical questions and vocabulary. Very few dealt with situation on stage.

Q1(c)

Most were able to deal with Antigone being selfish/selfless in passage, with some reference to rest of play. Most candidates were able to look at both sides of the question and interpret her refusal to allow Ismene to die with her in both ways. Her reaction to other characters especially Haemon, was also mentioned, with some candidates her desire for death and glory was also discussed, but in varying levels of detail.

Q2(a)

Most answers had the main details. Many candidates put an overemphasis on the tokens at the expense of the rest of the events. Some did not realise that details of Aegisthus' death were reported by a messenger; others simply stated that Aegisthus had been killed.

Q2(b)

Most candidates got the main details of Electra's feelings, and had some argument for how justified she was in her feelings, but not always with evidence. The best answers looked at it both from her point of view (rid of Aegisthus) and how Orestes had accomplished the deed. Her views on Pylades was not always discussed in any detail, if at all.

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Q2(c)

Most candidates were able to draw on the passage to compare Electra's joyful reaction to Aegisthus' death with her misery elsewhere, especially at the start of the play. They also looked at her reluctance to insult Aegisthus' head followed by the kakology with her attitude elsewhere. Many answers also gave good details of her portrayal in the rest of the play, and also looked at her attitude to Orestes when talking to him when he was disguised as similar to her reaction to him in the passage. Many candidates did not mention the death of Clytemnestra and Electra's reaction afterwards.

Section B**Q3**

Most candidates had some knowledge of omens and prophecies found in *Agamemnon*. Many candidates did not mention the omen of the eagles and the hare and/or Cassandra's visions. Better answers dealt with both, and their effect on the play's success, as well as other potential factors, such as characterisation, plot and visual spectacle. Some virtually ignored omens and prophecies and wrote an essay on 'what makes *Agamemnon* a successful play'.

Q4

Virtually all candidates dealt with Medea and Jason, although for quite a few this was the limit. Creon usually got a look in, and other answers also dealt with other characters, usually Aegeus. Better answers looked at a variety of characters, which even included the Chorus, Glauce and the children. Some answers saw the characters as very much 'black or white' but more subtle answers saw aspects of both good and bad in all characters. Reference to the play ranged from very precise and accurate details to summaries of the plot, and even just the myth.

Q5

Candidates generally saw a range of messages in the plays studied, and were able to discuss them. Some simply analysed the messages the plays gave, but better answers considered other reasons why the playwrights (sic) wrote their plays, with some even deciding that messages were not the main reason for writing the plays, but contributed to the entertainment of the audience or winning the prize.

F385 Greek Historians

General Comments:

Candidates generally had a sound grasp of the details of all three historians' work. Commentary Question 1 proved to be by far the more popular of the two, while of the essays, Question 3 was answered by a large majority of candidates; quite a few attempted question 5, while even the Plutarch question attracted a few answers. Spelling and legibility were more of an issue this year, not helped by the fact that virtually all candidates did not follow the instruction to start each answer on a new page.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A

Q1(a)

Answers were generally well focussed, dealing with the events in the prescribed time period. Some candidates answered why Persia attacked, rather than how it prepared. Almost all the answers mentioned the Xerxes/Artabanus dream story.

Q1(b)

Virtually all of the candidates were able to pick out some details from the passage which were typical of Herodotus, as well as aspects from the rest of the work which were not typical. There was some confusion about what a digression is. In a few cases, candidates discussed stylistic features while giving little if any evidence to back up their assertions.

Q1(c)

Most candidates were able to pick out details from the passage and the rest of the work about Xerxes' emotion and tyrannical behaviour. Fewer were able to find aspects where he was not depicted in this way. Many answers dealt with both aspects together, but some candidates were able to use examples of emotion as proof of his humanity (e.g. reviewing the army and weeping over man's fate). Although most candidates mentioned the Pythius incident, quite a few did not remember his name.

Q2(a)

There were some good answers to this question, but many candidates confused details of the Potidaea incident with what happened at Epidamnus or Corcyra.

Q2(b)

Candidates were able to draw upon the passage to discuss the question. Comparison with the rest of the work less successful. Many candidates did discuss the debate at Sparta in general terms, and several also mentioned Pericles' Funeral Speech. Better answers discussed both content and style. Most mentioned Thucydides' methodology in line 22, but were not always able to make it relevant to the question.

Q2(c)

Candidates were able to draw aspects from the passage, but found it harder to look at the rest of the work. Better answers did deal with both the short and the long-term reasons for the war breaking out, and discussed Thucydides' analysis of the outbreak of the war. A number of candidates successfully mentioned Thucydides' analysis as being used when discussing modern conflicts such as the Gulf Wars.

Section B

Q3

Candidates were generally able to give some detail from the *Histories* with most answers dealing with both sides of the question. The amount of evidence given varied – most candidates mentioned the story of Arion and the Dolphin as evidence for Herodotus being ‘The Father of Lies’, as well as his exaggeration of numbers. There was also support for the opposite point of view, with some answers citing archaeological and geographical details as evidence.

Q4

This was not a popular question, but those who did it knew the text well and were able to use their knowledge to argue a good case, mostly with good balance. Opinions about Themistocles’ motives were divided, but most candidates concluded that he was interested in Athens, but took advantage of his patriotic work when it presented itself.

Q5

There were many interesting replies as to what candidates found enjoyable about each of the authors. All candidates seemed to find something to enjoy from all the authors. Most answers expressed a preference for Herodotus for the quirkiness of his stories and the variety of his subject matter. Some liked Thucydides for the accuracy of his historiography and his military expertise, while others preferred Plutarch for the insight he gave into the lives of his subjects.

F386 City Life in Roman Italy

General Comments:

Candidates were well prepared for the examination and so very weak responses were rare. There were fewer rubric errors this year and the quality of written communication was also good.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

Section A

Q1(a)

Candidates were required to describe the wall painting from the House of Actius Anicetus. This was not the same as the description from Tacitus' Annals. Candidates who were familiar with the wall painting were able to comment on the colour (not black all over), the awning, seating, and even the city walls. Some responses included details of the ten-year ban which of course could not be seen in the painting. Here candidates had to focus on their knowledge of the wall painting only.

Q1(b)

The question asked for details of wall decoration from Pompeii and Herculaneum. In this case Scaurus' floor mosaics of his garum sauce and details from houses in Ostia were not appropriate detail. Impressive knowledge was shown of the wall decorations in the House of Menander, House of Octavius Quartio and the House of the Stags together with the Samnite House and the decoration in the House of Opus Craticium. Some candidates were carried away with impressive detailed knowledge but then forgot to address the question as to whether the depiction of the amphitheatre riot was the best wall decoration ever discovered.

Q1(c)

The key point of the question to answer here was the most *effective* way to *improve the appearance* of houses. There were several responses based on questions from previous series so candidates should be advised to read question very carefully to pick out the different nuances of questions. Several responses focussed on "important". However, those who addressed the question referred to Vitruvius and what a client might see when entering houses. Again, detail from Ostia was not required.

Q2(a)

Despite having a plan of the harbour of Claudius printed on the question paper a significant number of candidates did not use this. Some candidates were unsure of the term "mole" referring to mole hills out to sea. There were also many variations on the building of the island for the lighthouse. This was frequently described as being the whale itself, the ships sunk in the storm, and even the piles being made of obelisks. Clearer understanding was needed here.

Q2(b)

This was answered well with most candidates able to see the usefulness of the harbours to sailors and traders. The more perceptive responses were able to separate sailors and traders and discuss the benefits to both groups separately.

Q2(c)

As with Q1(c) this question required careful reading. Less successful responses discussed Claudius' reasons for developments in Ostia and other policies affecting his principate. Better

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answers realised that not *only* Claudius but other emperors (- often *emporer*s) made improvements to Ostia. Frequently mentioned was Nero and Severus in relation to the Great Warehouse. In addition. The sponsors of the Forum Baths, and Imagines Clipeatae were mentioned. The best answers addressed “cared about the people of Ostia”.

Section B

Q3

Candidates were instructed to use the images printed on the paper. This was too frequently ignored. Other candidates restricted their information to only the three images – in this case the higher Levels were not available as the images alone did not constitute a “good collection of detailed factual knowledge”.

Q4

It was felt reasonable that candidates should realise that many of the houses in the specification were for the wealthy and candidates gained credit for realising this. In addition, credit was given for appreciation of degrees of wealth – the less rich. Slaves were accepted as poor through some assumed that freedmen would also be poor which was not the case in Pompeii. More perceptive responses discussed the seating in the amphitheatre where one could see different social groups. Ostia provided useful material with the insula of Diana but also there was an assumption that the Garden Houses “as they were flats” were for poorer members of society.

Q5

This question was attempted by very few candidates. Some centres prepare candidates particularly for these types of questions and there were some fine responses in the top of the range. Sometimes it is felt that this question is attempted when Q3 and Q4 do not appeal. Often such responses are at the lower end of the range lacking detail and failing to address the question.

F387 Roman Britain: Life in the Outpost of the Empire

General Comments:

Examiners felt that there were fewer outstanding scripts at the top end of the mark range this year. At the lower end of the mark range, the standard seems to have improved again, though there were a few very weak scripts which showed little engagement with either the questions or the material. The most popular questions were Question 1 and Question 3, but Questions 2 and 4 were tackled by over 40% of the candidature. It was pleasing that there was a much greater spread of questions being tackled rather than the answers being dominated by two questions.

Legibility and quality of written communication have continued to deteriorate. Candidates should be advised to read through what they have written to ensure that their work communicates their ideas accurately and effectively. Most candidates still did not start the answer to each question on a new page, despite the instruction on the front of the examination paper. Generally, time seems to have been sensibly and productively, but there were a few examples of candidates running out of time. When this happened it was often with those who started by writing the essay first. It seems to have become quite fashionable to answer (a), the essay and then (b) – this was not often a successful technique. As in 2016, candidates often wrote at great length using additional booklets which were not labelled correctly and so it was sometimes difficult to follow the argument of particular answers.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A: Commentary Questions

Q1(a)

The question about how far religion in Roman Britain can be understood from sculptural evidence alone was very popular and often produced very respectable marks for both AO1 and AO2. Candidates were very careful about discussing each source which was printed on the paper, and many were able to bring in their own evidence to support their line of argument. There were some who missed the word 'alone' and so wrote everything they knew about sculpture which was in any way related to religion. Sometimes the argument was distorted by knowledge of the Celtic/Roman art style controversy, but the material needed for this question was clearly well known.

Q1(b)

The term 'foreign cults' was interpreted in many different ways, but generally a good attempt was made to discuss how much evidence there is to support the extent of 'foreign cults' in Britain. Most candidates made some effort to assess the notion of how important a part these foreign cults played in the everyday life of people in Roman Britain. Some did not understand what was meant by the term 'foreign cults'. Mithraism and Christianity were usually the cults discussed in greater depth and with supporting evidence. There was often reference to Isis and Cybele, but these were often passing references without mention of specific evidence.

Q2(a)

The inscription question was significantly more popular than last year's equivalent, though the marks show that it was not as successfully answered as Question 1. The commentaries on the inscriptions suggested that many candidates had not studied these inscriptions in much depth. There was a general lack of understanding of their function or of the significance of the wording within them. Some candidates did not seem to understand the word 'diversity'. Whilst there was a good deal of interesting comment on some of the inscriptions, especially on Longinus and Claudia

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Severa, it was not always linked closely enough to the question. Some of the inscriptions were not dealt with in detail, if at all. This was particularly true of the Classicianus and Antiochus inscriptions.

Q2(b)

This question gave candidates the opportunity to discuss elements of Romanisation and the extent to which people may have benefitted from Roman rule. It did not matter whether candidates agreed or disagreed with the view, provided the response was well-argued and supported with contextual knowledge and appropriate, specific detailed examples. Many candidates, however, resorted to generalisations and there was a significant lack of specific factual support. Whilst there was general acknowledgement that life did change quite rapidly for some people under Roman rule, few seemed to realise that life changed very little for a significant part of the population during the whole of the Roman occupation.

Section B: Essay Questions**Q3**

The question about the 'most impressive achievement' of the Romans in Britain was the most popular on the paper, though generally it was not quite as well-answered as Question 4. The question was designed to be an open question so that candidates could use their extensive knowledge of the specification to create an argument for a specific achievement. Answers were often very wide-ranging in the topics which were offered for discussion, but they often lacked specific evidence to support the points made. This usually meant that the AO1 marks and AO2 marks were not in the same level. The most impressive achievements ranged from roads to administration, from military matters to villas and from towns to Romanisation. At least one candidate tried to answer a combined Question 3/4. Another candidate seemed to basing his argument on the 'What have the Romans ever done for us?' scene from Monty Python's 'Life of Brian' and concluded that their most impressive achievement was conquering and keeping order in a place like Britain.

Q4

This was a question which candidates seemed well prepared for and the standard arguments and examples were usually well known. This meant that the AO1 marks were generally good and that the discriminating factor was the extent to which candidates used the evidence to answer the question. There were some who repeated information, almost word for word and in the case of some typed scripts simply copied and pasted, from Question 1(a). Whilst this is not prohibited, it usually meant that the material was not tailored precisely enough to the question. There were also some instances of candidates not reading the whole question carefully enough and they focussed their response on the quotation and not on the art which was the topic of the question.

F388 Art and Architecture in the Greek World

General Comments:

Greek Art continues to be a very popular topic at A level, with an increase in the number of candidates studying this unit. Whilst there were many outstanding performances, it was felt that overall the standard at the top end of the range was not quite as good as last year. At the lower end of the grade range, however, there was an improvement in the performance of candidates.

The overall quality of the answers to the commentary questions seemed fairly high with some candidates providing perceptive observations and displaying a good ability to compare and contrast the images. Candidates could have improved their performance in both commentary and essay questions if they had planned their responses and taken time to define the limits of the question (i.e. What is a 'master storyteller', or what does the phrase 'rich in narrative' mean to a candidate for example?) before beginning the main body of the answer. Essays often began with a definitive conclusion ('metopes are richer in narrative and I will show why') which led to some rather bland discussions in favour of that answer or a conclusion which totally disproved it. The essays, in general, could have demonstrated a much stronger structure. Some, despite attempts to compare and contrast, were either rather meandering affairs or rather static responses taking one aspect of the question then the next (e.g. metopes then friezes; or Delphi then the Acropolis). The best responses displayed engaging argument, perceptive evaluation and excitement about the subject at hand.

Legibility and quality of written communication seemed to have deteriorated again this year and there were several illegible scripts which took a considerable time to decipher. The misspelling of technical terms included many of the usual suspects [symmetry, repetition, drapery, *contrapposto*], but there was much evidence of some new favourites this year: Doryphorbus, koros, autonomy [for anatomy], Kleixias, Lysippos, and Erektion. Often candidates used 'sculptor' and 'sculpture' interchangeably and this led to some confusion in the quality and logic of their arguments.

There were far fewer rubric errors this year; these mostly focussed on candidates choosing to answer just one question or treating one element of the commentary question as an essay. Candidates need to ensure that they are familiar with the rubric for the paper and how they should use their time effectively. Examiners felt that some candidates prioritised the commentary question over the essay.

To repeat examiners' concerns from 2016:

- Candidates did not provide enough detail about the pieces under consideration.
- There were far too many generalisations and evidence without argument connecting it to the question.
- The majority of candidates still seem to under-estimate the value of planning answers.
- Most candidates did not start the answer to each question on a new page, despite the instruction on the front of the examination paper and the reminder at the beginning of Section B.
- Candidates who used additional booklets did not number them in sequence, so it was often difficult to follow an argument.
- Those who used asterisks, stars and other forms of abbreviations to indicate continuation of a response, often did not make it clear enough where the answer was being continued.

Comments on Individual Questions:**Section A: Commentary Questions****Q1(a)**

Generally speaking, candidates understood what the question was asking and most could comment on the importance of the body shape of the Doryphoros and compare it neatly with the less developed form of the Kritios Boy, and go on to compare it, sometimes favourably sometimes unfavourably, with the Riace Bronzes, Artemision Zeus, or Diskobolos. A few candidates seemed unaware that the Blond Boy is just a head. Many candidates were able to draw on an appropriate range of examples, although one or two were stuck comparing with Egyptian models and archaic *kouroi* or examples of 4th century sculpture. There were occasional more inventive answers which dealt with the Hestia Giustiniana and other classical female sculpture. Nonetheless, although candidates could make good comparisons, in general they did not grasp the finesse of the Doryphoros when compared to other sculptures of the period. Examiners were surprised by the lack of reference to the canon of proportions laid down by Polykleitos and to the fact that the original was a bronze statue.

Q1(b)

This question elicited many strong responses and was generally successfully answered by candidates at all levels. Candidates were able to make good comparisons on the features of the Apoxyomenos and the Doryphoros from the hair down to the legs. Some struggled to comment efficiently on the ways in which the arm position of the Apoxyomenos breaks the classical pose to create something different and interesting, although those that did, generally went on to comment more favourable about other features. Some students also were forced into repeating information from Question 1(a) and sometimes used information which would have been more valuable in Question 1(a). Not all candidates were able to identify that these were Roman copies of Greek bronzes (or the relevance of that if they did) and some were confused about the century to which each belonged. It was disappointing that some answers placed undue focus on the struts visible on the Apoxyomenos.

Q2(a)

Last year over 80% of candidates tackled the vase-painting question, this year it was just over 30% of candidates. Overall, the question seemed less well-handled than Question 1(a). While candidates could point to occasional scenes on the François vase in detail, very few could accurately recall the majority of the scenes even at the most basic level. Analyses tended to lack depth, not least because candidates failed to define the notion of a 'master storyteller' adequately. Or they showed great detail of just one or two scenes without considering the vase in its entirety. A number of candidates related the scenes to the Trojan War but did not go beyond that to the more specific Peleus-Achilles association or to show how the friezes were, therefore, interrelated. Disappointingly, the number of friezes was often taken as an indication that Kleitias was not a master storyteller, rather than a baroque richness of interlinking stories far removed from the geometrically designed scenes of earlier vases. There were some startling examples of not looking at the pictures provided - for example the frequent appearance of the Calydonian bull (when it was not the Caledonian bore).

Q2(b)

Comparing and contrasting the wedding of Peleus and Thetis friezes on the two pots seemed rather less well-handled than the comparative 1(b) question. There were, however, some good responses which talked about style, character position (Cheiron's posture), Hebe's dress, use of colour, or the small details (Dionysus' vine; Peleus offering wine). A significant number of candidates failed to get far beyond a basic understanding of position, use of colour, and occasionally use of incision. Very few understood fully who the characters were and where they were positioned in the two friezes. Candidates often got confused and talked about other friezes on the pots without relating them to the question at hand, although the few that did showed good

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nuance of understanding. The of Wedding of Peleus and Thetis was sometimes confused with wedding of Perithoos and Hippodameia.

Section B: Essay Questions**Q3**

The question about whether sanctuaries [often misspelt] were more for the gods or people elicited some lively discussion. There was a very broad range of responses on this question with some excellent answers that not only displayed in-depth knowledge regarding the buildings at different sanctuary sites but also offered some insightful comments about the Greeks' relationships with their gods. It was possible with the right range of knowledge to do very well on this question but some candidates struggled to go beyond a quite basic understanding of the buildings at sanctuary sites and their relative functions. Those who fell back on discussing activities in sanctuaries without associating them with particular buildings did not score highly on AO1. Commendably few candidates sat on the fence to reach the conclusion that sanctuaries were equally for the gods and the people. The Propylaia was under-represented in answers that considered the Acropolis when it came to considering spaces dedicated to human activity.

Q4

The question of whether *metopes* or *friezes* are richer in narrative was the most popular question on the paper. It seemed to provide candidates who were comfortable with architectural sculpture with the opportunity to indulge their interests in *metopes* and *friezes*. Most responses were able to draw on a range of material and could demonstrate the relevance of that material to the question of narrative. This was especially true of the Herakles *metopes* at Olympia or Herakles and the Kerkopes at Selinus, where there was a good range of knowledge and intelligent commentary. Generally speaking, candidates seemed much less comfortable talking about friezes, but those who had a good understanding of the Parthenon or the Siphnian Treasury *friezes* tended to offer better answers. Some were able to refer to the frieze on the temple of Apollo at Bassai. Perhaps, unsurprisingly, students found the Herakles *metopes* richer in narrative, but the intrinsic interest of the Herakles' story meant that they could not really go beyond that to comment on the possibility that friezes also had a rich narrative – even if that was of a rather different nature. A few candidates were able to point to Connelly's alternative reading of the Parthenon frieze as the sacrifice of Erechtheus's daughters or to the fact that the frieze was very hard to see due to its position. Examiners particularly enjoyed explorations of the Parthenon Centauromachy *metopes* which candidates found both 'rich in narrative' and lacking in narrative. As in previous sessions there were some candidates who could not identify precise examples and those who thought that *pediments* were *metopes* or *friezes*.

F389 Comic Drama in the Ancient World

General Comments:

It was clear that most candidates had enjoyed reading the plays. There was a wide range of personal response, though not always balanced by sufficient reference to relevant evidence. Candidates who had been able to attend or see modern performances of ancient plays generally made good use of the experience, especially in responses to Question 4. Good use was also made of the introductions and notes in the prescribed Penguin editions. Allocation of time was once again good; very few candidates appeared to have run out of time. Plans were well-used. There were fewer references than usual to plays besides the four prescribed ones, though several candidates referred to *Frogs* and *Pseudolus*. Poor or nearly illegible handwriting caused problems in many scripts. Candidates are urged to check well in advance with people unfamiliar with their writing how easily it can be read – particularly if they have developed an idiosyncratic style.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A:

These two commentary questions enable candidates to show their knowledge and understanding of one or two aspects of the plays or of the authors' respective techniques. Successful responses demonstrate such knowledge and understanding by clear reference to the contents of the stimulus passage and material from elsewhere in relevant plays. Question 1 was by far the more popular one.

Q1a

'Using the passage as a starting point' is a prompt to candidates to refer both to the passage and to other parts of the play. Strong responses included balanced coverage of both characters and all parts of the play and made good use of the passage. It was perfectly acceptable to come to a conclusion based on the fact that Strepsiades appeared to change his opinions more often than Pheidippides. Most responses, however, focused on the extent and depth of fundamental changes in appearance, personality and attitudes. Very strong responses also commented on differences in the nature of those changes.

Q1b

It was important to read the question carefully; too many responses focused on how the serious messages might have been received, or about how they are delivered, rather than identifying the messages contained in the plays and discussing which play contained the more serious message.

Strong responses discussed in detail the serious elements of the 'Reconciliation' scene in *Lysistrata*, with sensible comments about the need for Sparta and Athens to bury their differences in view of the perceived threat from Persia. Most, however, confined their comments to the confrontation between Lysistrata and the Magistrate. Successful discussions of *Clouds* identified the range of serious messages covered in the Parabasis and Agon as well as the moral messages contained in the play as a whole. Useful references were made to the trial and execution of Socrates.

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Q2a

There were some effective comments on the passage itself, but only a few really strong responses which showed awareness of the range of techniques employed by Plautus in the play as a whole. Good comments were made about the running joke of confusion between the twins on which the whole play is based. There was some awareness of physical humour, indicated in the passage, but only the very strongest responses commented on aspects of the dialogue elsewhere in the play or on techniques not represented in the passage.

Q2b

Most responses showed good knowledge of the parts played by both slaves in their respective plays. Stronger responses discussed what made a 'believable' character, considering both 'realistic' and 'fitting the conventions of the genre/expectations of the audience'. 'Interesting' was sometimes well-examined, with very strong responses questioning the underlying premise of the question.

Section B:

The number of plays to be considered was deliberately left open, as was each candidate's selection of plays. It was possible to gain full marks by discussing a suitable quantity of evidence from one play by each author. Most candidates discussed both of the prescribed plays by each author. Appropriate discussion of any other named play by either Aristophanes or Plautus was credited, as was other relevant contextual knowledge. It was clear that some candidates were slightly confused, both about who had written which plays and about which character appeared in which. Socrates was regularly confused with Sosicles, or even with the tragedian Sophocles. Question 3 was slightly less popular than Question 4 though the latter was often less well answered. Stronger responses to both questions arranged their subject-matter thematically rather than play by play.

Q3

The physical environment and material elements of performance were the focus here, with more being required than just a general description of the performance space and standard costumes. There were a few excellent responses, arranged in the categories mentioned in the question, the wording having been taken directly from the Specification. Stronger responses covered all elements, with good and well-targeted examples from named plays. Often these considered how a scene might be directed, and therefore what use the director could make of all those elements. It was acceptable to come to a conclusion on the basis that dialogue or comic technique was more important to one playwright than the other, but responses which discussed just that, with no references to the items in the question, were generally much less satisfactory.

Q4

There were some very thoughtful responses, where candidates had clearly relished the opportunity to discuss what made a successful comedy and what constituted a 'happy ending.' Definitions and criteria varied. The important thing was to show either detailed knowledge of two plays or wide-ranging knowledge of three or four, using relevant examples. Some candidates considered whether a 'good' comedy was necessarily successful, the main case in point being *Clouds*. Such candidates usually showed good awareness of the fact that we do not know why *Clouds* came third in 423, nor how it originally ended. Responses which took a narrative approach, discussing each play in turn, were generally less successful. There was no 'right' answer.

F390 Virgil and the World of the Hero

General Comments:

F390 remained the most popular of A2 units sat by candidates in the June 2017 examination. The vast majority of candidates had been very well prepared for the examination and demonstrated impressive levels of knowledge and understanding; in particular, this year saw much closer engagement with the tasks set and there was far less mere off-loading of information. It was also encouraging to observe the number of responses attempting to make direct comparisons between the two epics when this was required by the question. There were very few rubric errors this year although timing did seem to be more of an issue than in previous years. The most popular combination of questions was 2 and 3, although it was encouraging to note that there was more of an even spread in questions attempted than in the past.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

Q1(a)

Some answers profitably used the passage to provide a good steer to the response irrespective of whether the candidate agreed or disagreed with the given view. This, however, was not a prerequisite for obtaining a top level. There were many good responses which evaluated each half well and reached informed conclusions based on close study of structure and/or the development of the Roman hero. Other responses demonstrated a range of examples from both halves of the epic and offered a comparison as to which was the more superior. Weaker responses tended to be AO1 heavy or to offer useful insights into why one half is more superior to the other but without making reference to the epic. Responses that claimed the first half to be best and then went on to argue that the second is more superior did not score highly under AO2. The importance of planning an answer cannot be stressed enough.

Q1(b)

This question posed few problems to candidates and was, on the whole, well completed. There were many very good responses which went beyond mere listing of women and goddesses but carefully evaluated their contributions to not only Aeneas but also Roman destiny. Stronger responses tended to see that these were not the same things and dealt with them separately. Much detailed knowledge was in evidence in responses to this task and many candidates managed to make reference to a range of females other than Juno, Venus and Dido. It was also pleasing to note that many more candidates were successfully managing to discuss both sides of the argument in similar depth.

Q2(a)

Generally, this question was well answered. The simile was better analysed than in previous years, many more candidates made reference to the whole of the passage and there was more of an effort to explain how the chosen examples were moving. Many answers also successfully demonstrated an understanding of the cultural context and sensitivity concerning Juturna's immortality, showing how terrible it is for her to have to spend eternity grieving.

Where marks were not gained was often through one of the following reasons. There were some confused responses because the passage had not been read closely enough. Juturna and the Dira were seen to be one and the same. At other times, candidates elected to discuss why the passage was a vivid piece of writing, rather than a moving one. Some responses only discussed one half of the passage.

Q2(b)

There were many very long answers and, in some instances, the quality did not justify the length. Responses were often polarised: some dealt almost exclusively with the passages; some with the wider epics almost ignoring the passages. Some showed a good balance between the two. Stronger responses ranged beyond the final fights to see that both heroes had their inglorious moments with Turnus making the most of the broken peace treaty, for example, and Hektor arrogantly ignoring Poulydamas. These responses also often adopted a comparative approach to the question throughout the answer rather than listing examples of why sympathy is felt for both Hektor and Turnus and then attempting a comparison between the two in the conclusion.

Section B**Q3**

Responses to this popular question were generally well done though in many cases would have benefited considerably from planning. There were three distinct parts to this question and many candidates should have marshalled their ideas and relevant examples before embarking upon writing this essay. Those who did not tended to meander and return to earlier points later on in the essay or failed to tackle one of the parts; detestable was often entirely omitted or scantily dealt with. A range of dictionary definitions of demoralised was credited.

Stronger responses tended to consider both sides of the argument for each part of the question, draw upon a range of relevant examples from the whole of the *Aeneid* and consider the question from both a Roman and modern viewpoint.

Q4

There were many very well completed answers to this question. Candidates clearly enjoy writing about the *Iliad* and, where adequate revision of the text had been undertaken, found little difficulty in finding examples of the glory to be found in fighting and the emotional cost of the sufferings it causes. Many responses were also able to make meaningful comment on the shield of Achilles. It was also pleasing to note the number of candidates making reference to the Augustan background when referring to the *Aeneid* and finding a range of examples of fighting from the whole of the epic. The best responses adopted a comparative approach when discussing the texts and explored the question from all angles.

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