

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

J199

For first teaching in 2017

J199/21 Summer 2019 series

Version 1

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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. 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 can be downloaded from OCR.



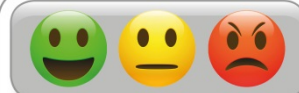
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Paper 21 series overview

J199/21 (The Homeric World) is one of three Literature and Culture components for GCSE Classical Civilisation. This component focuses on the study of the culture of the Mycenaean Age and selected books of Homer's *Odyssey*. To do well on this paper, candidates need to show knowledge and understanding of what life was like in the Mycenaean Age and the themes, characterisation and plot of the *Odyssey*.

Most candidates were able to show a good knowledge and understanding of the Mycenaean Age and Homer; there was little difference in marks for the two sections. Some wrote with great precision about the Mycenaean Age and were able to form a very accurate impression of what life was like. Others wrote more generally, but were usually able to make sensible and balanced judgements. At times, such as in questions 2 and 3, candidates seemed a little unsure as to whether they needed to give facts, analysis or both. Detailed response (8-mark) and extended response (15-mark) questions produced a variety of answers, both in terms of quality and ideas produced. Candidates generally made a good attempt to answer the question, but some were a little repetitive or strayed off topic.

Time was an issue for some candidates, as there were instances of the 15-mark Homer answer being much shorter than the Mycenae 15-mark answer. However, most seemed to have plenty of time to complete the paper. When candidates did not complete the paper, time was often wasted in questions by introductions or restating ideas.

| | | |
|---|------------|--|
|  | AfL | <p>If candidates seem to take too long to make ideas or repeat them, get them to type an answer. Highlight or cut sections that you feel are unnecessary. Make a note of the mark you would give them, but do not put it on the work. Send the updated version back to them for them to improve (with no more than three suggestions). Candidates can then submit an improved version.</p> <p>If you do this with several pieces of work, candidates will hopefully be able to structure longer responses better and more concisely.</p> |
|---|------------|--|

Examiners were impressed with the knowledge of the topography of Mycenae and survival of the Linear B tablets. There was also some excellent knowledge shown of individual pieces of evidence for Mycenaean life in Questions 12 and 13. Many candidates also wrote very thoughtfully about Penelope in Question 20. Particular areas that caused issues included pottery types, grave circles and tombs. In the *Odyssey* candidates struggled to recall information from speeches in Questions 17(a) and 19. At various points in the papers, a major problem seemed to be that candidates had not read the question carefully.

Candidate performance overview

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:

- Wrote concisely but with precision and without repeating ideas
- Wrote arguments for and against statements where appropriate in 8 and 15-mark questions
- Shaped their answer to the particular wording of the question
- Quoted from the printed literary sources to illustrate their ideas

Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:

- Spent too much time talking generally about a topic (e.g. why the Linear B tablets survived) without thinking how relevant this was to the question
- Only answered a 15-mark question from one viewpoint (e.g. only discussing Linear B in

Candidate performance overview

Question 12 or how the gods improve the *Odyssey* in Question 23)

- Ignored the wording of the question at times so that their answer was partly irrelevant
- Struggled to understand what was meant by “decoration” and “design” in Questions 9 and 10
- Had limited and rather repetitive analysis in Question 23

Section A overview

Section A comprises 45 marks worth of questions on the Mycenaean Age. These include questions that require short answers demonstrating knowledge and understanding, short analytical statements and a detailed response (8-mark) question. All of these are introduced by a stimulus source. Candidates must also write an extended response answer from a choice of two optional 15-mark questions.

Candidates showed a good general knowledge of the Mycenaean Age. They were comfortable when they had the freedom to select relevant information. This was most evident in the detailed knowledge that many candidates could give in both the extended responses optional questions. All but the very best answers found it challenging to compare and contrast ideas effectively in these questions. Many candidates found it hard when required to give a precise piece of information to one of the shorter questions as factual knowledge was often hazy; often they struggled to separate Grave Circle A from B or to distinguish between the various pottery types.

Question 1

Study Source A

- 1 By what name is this burial site known?

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

Most candidates got this question correct, but a significant proportion answered with Grave Circle B. The weakest candidates often answered with the name of an actual city.

Question 2

- 2 What types of graves did it contain?

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

Any answer that included the word "shaft" was accepted. A sizeable number thought it contained only cist graves.

Some candidates simply said that it contained the graves of rich people. Candidates must read the question carefully; the question asked about the types of graves, not the people who were buried there.

Question 3

- 3 Explain the location of Mycenaean graves in relation to the city walls. Make **two** points.

-
.....
.....
.....
-
.....
.....
.....

[4]

This question was one of the most problematic on the paper. Many candidates did not know where the graves of Mycenae were located or made a statement that suggested that all the graves were in the same place; it was not uncommon to read in one point that they were outside the walls and in the next point they were inside them. Candidates needed to say which graves were in which locations. Many confused the locations of grave circles A and B, more placed Grave Circle B to the West of Mycenae than the East; it was clear from some of the muddled answers that were seen that this was an area that centres need to go over carefully with candidates.

The best answers did carefully distinguish between grave circles A and B, although relatively few discussed how grave circle A was located inside the walls as the walls were rebuilt to encompass it. Many suggested sensibly that the graves were found outside the walls to avoid pollution, both physical and spiritual, and some felt that having them close to the walls gave the goods buried within them greater security.

Question 4

Study Source B

- 4 Suggest **three** reasons why it would have been hard for an invader to approach the gate.

-
.....
-
.....
-
.....

[3]

This question caused several issues to candidates as they did not read it carefully enough. The key was to reflect on the word “approach”. Too many talked about actually getting through the gate, commenting on its narrow width. Others discussed the difficulty in getting over the walls (often with impressive detail on the size of them), although there would have been no need to do this to approach the gate. It seemed that many were simply writing about why it would have been hard to get into the city.

Many however did answer the question very well. References to hills, ravines and uphill paths were frequent. Better candidates explained what difficulties these created, but lower ability answers simply stated what the topography was like and left it to the examiner to make the necessary analysis. There were further good ideas on the intimidation caused by the Lion Gate and the narrowness of the path leading to the citadel.

Question 5

- 5 Explain how two other features of Mycenae, **not** shown in the picture, made it easier for the inhabitants to defend the city. Make **two** points.

-
.....
.....
.....
-
.....
.....
.....

[4]

This question also illustrated the importance of looking carefully at the printed source and reading the question carefully. A large number of candidates discussed the walls, despite these being clearly evident in the picture and the emboldened instruction not to use the features shown in the picture. As a result, they scored no marks for this idea. A less common error seen in some candidates was to discuss galleries, a feature of Tiryns.

Examiners allowed discussion of the elevation of Mycenae, even if used in Question 4. Most discussed sally ports well (several seemed to think its function was merely a look-out post), and there were sensible comments made on the cistern, although a few thought the water came from a spring within the city walls.

Question 6

Study Source C

- 6 What do you think were the main difficulties in doing trade in Mycenaean times? Justify your response. Use the map as a starting point and your own knowledge in your answer.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [8]

The best answers focused on trade aspects that were particularly pertinent to the Mycenaean Age; candidates were thereby able to show good knowledge of Mycenaean life. Such ideas included a lack of currency, the concepts of “island hopping” and sailing seasons. Many were able to use the archaeological evidence of the Ulu Burun shipwreck to illustrate the difficulties. Discussion of land travel was less common, but there were some good ideas on the use of chariots and roads, as well as the mountainous terrain.

The map was used reasonably well by most candidates, but some totally ignored it and wasted a valuable source of ideas.

There was widespread discussion of general sea-faring difficulties, lack of technology, hostilities between cities and cargo being plundered. Examiners were impressed at the ingenuity of candidates to come up with a plethora of difficulties, but what really separated the best answers was the range of different factors. Weaker candidates tended to produce two or three generic ideas which could have been written by someone who had not studied the period.

Question 7

Study Source D

- 7 What is the name for this type of Mycenaean jar?

.....

..... [1]

This question caused difficulties for candidates and was the worst answered question on the paper; less than 40% of candidates knew the answer. While virtually all named a pottery type, there was widespread support for kylix, amphora and pithos as well as the correct answer.

Question 8

- 8 Suggest what it might have originally contained.

.....
 [1]


This question was answered very well.

Question 9 (a)

- 9 (a) Identify **two** features of the decoration of this vessel that are typical of Mycenaean pottery.

.....

 [2]

| | | |
|---|----------------------|--|
|  | Misconception | The word “decoration” caused problems for many candidates. They often wrote about the design and shape of the object and thus tended to repeat ideas in Question 10. As a result, there was widespread discussion of the handles and spout here which were irrelevant, unless there was discussion of the decoration of these. |
|---|----------------------|--|

Candidates who chose decorative features often wrote very generally. Words such as “patterns”, “colours” and “paint” were not credited as they did not have the necessary precision that examiners were looking for. Some candidates also mistakenly wrote of paint colour deriving from the minerals that were used. Very few seemed to know the colour was actually a slip.

Better answers were more specific, either highlighting the specific colours that were seen on vessels or the shapes that could be seen. These were variously interpreted as swirls, circles, bands, lines; examiners were willing to accept any reasonable explanation.

Question 9 (b)

(b) Suggest **one** reason why it was decorated in this way.

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

This question proved difficult with less than half of candidates gaining the mark. Many wrote of it being attractive which was fine, but more seemed to think that it was to show wealth. Examiners did not believe this was a key reason why stirrup jars would have been decorated in this way. Others felt that it was to indicate what the contents of the jar were, but examiners felt this would have been too unlikely to credit it.

Question 10

10 Identify **one** design feature of this vessel **and** suggest its purpose.

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

This question did not elicit the kind of answers that examiners were hoping to see. It was hoped that candidates might talk about the false spout or the position and size of the real spout. However, such comments were rare. Most wrote simply about the presence of handles which made the jar easier to carry or a spout which would aid pouring. These were credited as some types of vessels did not have one or both of these.

As a result, nearly all candidates achieved full marks.

Question 11

11 Suggest **two** reasons why the Mycenaeans made vessels out of clay.

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

Most candidates answered this question very well.

Question 12

- 12 'The Linear B tablets tell us more about the lives of the Mycenaeans than any other type of evidence.' How far do you agree with this statement? [15]

Around two-thirds of candidates attempted this question. There was minimal difference in the marks achieved for this question and Question 13. Approximately 55% of these answers for Question 12 achieved between 7 and 11 marks.

Some candidates spent too long discussing how the tablets survived and the use of syllables and ideograms, without attempting to analyse the facts. Others could have been a bit more precise at times on what the tablets were used for; comments describing them as receipts instructions or even shopping lists were common. A sizeable number wrote about how the scripts could have been mistranslated.

Many were able to recall and discuss precise details of the contents of individual tablets, which was what examiners were looking for. Discussion often featured areas such as administration, religion or occupations. This was often very clear and well structured. There was some very impressive knowledge of quantities of goods that candidates were able to recall.

Candidates usually went on to describe other objects. Particular favourites included the Lion Hunt Dagger, frescoes and the Warrior Vase. Some broadened their scope in considering the cities themselves, which was very pleasing.

As was expected, a key discriminator was whether candidates were able to directly compare the various types of evidence. Most candidates did not do so, except in a brief conclusion.

| <i>Better responses</i> | <i>Weaker responses</i> |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spent equal time discussing Linear B and other types of evidence Gave precise examples of evidence with plenty of details Talked about the strengths and weaknesses of each type of evidence Directly compared the quality, usefulness and reliability of each type of evidence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focused too heavily, or entirely, on one type of evidence Gave few examples, especially of Linear B tablets, and wrote more generally (e.g. The Lion Hunt Dagger shows the armour used, not describing what armour it shows) Talked only about the strengths of the evidence <p>Stated what each piece of evidence was, without stating how it compared with other evidence.</p> |

Exemplar 1

It also tells us about food production - it is mentioned 420 wine jars were kept in krassas - showing Mycenaeans drank a lot of wine & utilized agriculture. It also tells us about the political structure - words like 'wanax' meaning king, 'tegefa' and 'lawegotas' tell us Mycenae had a strong political hierarchy. It also tells us Mycenae had 800 coastal watchmen - meaning they were likely to be invaded by sea.

On the other hand - there are some limitations to these Linear B tablets. There was no sense of chronology to them - it only gives us one time frame without being able to see the progression. It is also not safe to assume that one mention of a certain thing means all Mycenaeans did that. Also, since only the rich could read & write, only records of palace life were recorded & we don't know about poorer Mycenaeans. Some record tablets are broken or undecipherable and ones not involved in the fire of the temple were not recorded - thus we don't have a complete picture of Mycenaean life. Also, most tablets were simply records of items, not stories - so we don't know what life was like to a civilian clearly. Other items such as the lion hunt dagger give a clearer picture of hunting & armour, and the warrior vase gives a clear picture of the progression of Mycenaean armour.

The votive figurines & Rhyton tell us more about religious offerings. Frescoes, like the Mycenaean lady, tell us more about fashion as well as animals. A stela in Grave circle A also tells us more about chariots.

Overall Linear B tablets don't tell us more about Mycenaean life than other forms of evidence as most evidence on the tablets is not applicable to the average Mycenaean and other texts tell us more about armor, fashion, religion, hunting and more.

Exemplar 1 shows the central part of a very fine response to the question. There is some terrific detail of individual tablets in the first paragraph. The candidate has managed to discuss three tablets and what each tells us in 8 lines.

The comments on the limitations of the evidence are particularly impressive. This is the kind of discussion that examiners are looking for in giving a mark from the top band. At the end, the argument progresses smoothly into the next section of the response about other types of evidence that give a clearer picture. It should then contrast what impression we get of warfare from Linear B and other objects, and which type of evidence was the more informative.

Question 13

- 13 'The items that the Mycenaeans created were designed more to be useful rather than to look attractive.' How far do you agree with this statement? [15]

Around one-third of candidates attempted this question with results very similar to those achieved for Question 12.

Most candidates were able to describe some items in detail. Examiners were generally very impressed with the knowledge shown of objects such as the Lion Hunt Dagger, rhyta and various military items. There was excellent discussion by many of decorative techniques such as granulation and inlay. Stronger responses used these terms very accurately. Weaker ones either did not know the correct term or used the wrong term.

Most candidates chose to describe at least three specific items. It was felt that some answers could have given a little less detail on the items they chose, focusing instead on a slightly wider range of objects. Equally, some candidates needed to widen the range of object types; some answers focused very heavily on pottery or frescoes, highlighting several examples of each, but without discussing different types of objects such as metalwork or weaponry. While it is clearly impossible to cover the full range in a 15–20 minute response, there should be an attempt to cover a variety of different areas.

Some candidates argued entirely in support of, or against, the question. While such responses can gain high marks, it is harder to do so as candidates do limit what they can write about. As a result, those who discussed only useful items rarely discussed items like jewellery. Those who wrote entirely in support usually omitted military equipment, although some did argue that armour was mainly designed to be attractive; this did seem to be a rather forced idea. The best answers were able to argue effectively that a single item (such as the Warrior Vase) was both useful and attractive.

Key point

A difficulty that many candidates faced was a tendency to list items that were useful, then to list items that were attractive. They then proceeded straight to a concluding paragraph, which often restated previous ideas.

To achieve the highest marks, candidates must directly compare the two elements of the question. This is best done throughout the essay, rather than in a brief conclusion.

Section B overview

Section B comprises 45 marks worth of questions on the prescribed books of Homer's *Odyssey*. These include questions that require short answers demonstrating knowledge and understanding, short analytical statements and a detailed response (8-mark) question. All of these are introduced by a stimulus source. Candidates must also write an extended response answer from a choice of two optional 15-mark questions.

Candidates showed a good knowledge of the plot. Often weaker responses related the main facts of an episode, whether or not the question required them; facts must be relevant to gain credit. This was highlighted in the early questions where many described the plan to blind Polyphemus, which was not required in any of the answers. Questions that required the most precise knowledge such as 15 and 17(a) caused difficulties.

Use of the passages varied. Most candidates did make a point and back it up with a clear reference. Weaker answers occasionally just quoted from the passage or gave a vague reference. Giving a quotation and then making a simple statement about it is all that is required.

Examiners were impressed on the whole with answers to the 8- and 15-mark questions; usually it was the variety of ideas that was the key discriminator. Sometimes the analysis of weaker responses was rather repetitive.

Question 14

Study Source E

14 Explain why Odysseus chose to escape in the manner that he did. Make **two** points.

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

Candidates often did not attempt to explain why Odysseus chose to escape in the manner that he did. They often preferred to simply describe how he escaped. Many chose to describe the blinding of Polyphemus and the reason for it. This was also not part of the question. Others simply stated that he escaped in the manner he did to avoid being caught, without stating what he did.

Better answers considered why he chose to escape under the ram, commenting on how he would not be felt or how he could leave silently. A few mentioned that he chose to leave last, but this was not felt to be something, without realising the ram decided to leave last, not Odysseus.

Question 15

15 What happened to the ram after Odysseus and his crew had left Polyphemus' island?

.....

.....

.....

..... [2]

Candidates found this question challenging, with only around 34% of candidates getting both marks. Many seemed to be guessing answers. Common incorrect answers included the ram returning to Polyphemus or being killed by Polyphemus. Many did correctly state that it was sacrificed, missing the second mark in saying this was a sacrifice to Poseidon or Athene. There were a number of unusual answers seen to this question, including that the ram jumped off a cliff, that it drowned, that Polyphemus killed it as it had betrayed him or even that it returned to Polyphemus and told him Odysseus' name.

It was evident that this question was a good discriminator of candidate ability.

Question 16

16 What impression do you get of Polyphemus from this passage? Make **two** points.

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-
-
-
-
-
-

[4]

Candidates often found this question tricky. They described elements of Polyphemus' character that were shown elsewhere in the story, such as his eating the crew of Odysseus. Others sought to explain Odysseus' actions in light of Polyphemus' behaviour, which was not relevant.

Candidates did not always use the passage well in this question. Many did not give quotations or references, thereby losing the two marks available for this. It was regular to see Polyphemus being described as caring to his ram or vengeful, without any evidence. Better responses provided clear evidence.

Many candidates talked about his foolishness in getting blinded. He is shown as foolish in the passage, but more insightful responses commented on how he still believed he was called nobody, when he should have realised by now that this was part of Odysseus' trick. Others talked about their empathy for Polyphemus; this may be a valid response to the passage, but it was not what the question asked.

Exemplar 2 shows an ideal response to this question. There are two clear points made, each backed up well with a quotation and further analysis. There is no need to for the candidate to contrast his behaviour at the end of the first point, even though it is a correct idea.

Exemplar 2

- Polyphemus comes across as loving & tender to the ram. He says "You have never lagged behind others" to his ram. This portrays him as tender as he is speaking very gently and kindly to his ram, which contrasts to the monstrous ways he killed Odysseus' crew.
- Polyphemus comes across as vengeful. He says "Nobody... has not yet escaped death." This proves he is vengeful as he is affirming with himself that he or others will kill Odysseus. vengeance for Odysseus blinding him. [4]

Question 17 (a)

Study Source F

- 17 (a) Odysseus' crew believed there was gold and silver in the bag. State **two** other things that they said while Odysseus was asleep.

-
-
-

[2]

As with other questions where candidates were asked to recall a precise fact from the *Odyssey*, this was an excellent discriminator of ability. Many candidates guessed answers, suggesting that they said Odysseus was being selfish, a bad leader and responsible for their sufferings or even that they planned to kill him. There were numerous opinions stated, such as they didn't trust Odysseus. Such candidates did not seem to realise they need to give parts of a speech rather than their own opinions.

Better answers were often able to virtually quote phrases from the mark scheme. The most common correct answers were how he didn't share spoils and how they should open the bag.

Question 17 (b)

- (b) Give evidence to suggest one way in which one of these other things was untrue.

.....
 [1]

The best answers were seen from candidates who had said that he hadn't shared spoils in the previous question. These were then able to pick out the sharing of food on Ismarus or Aegaea. Others were a little too vague in simply saying that he did share food or treasure on occasions. Others correctly stated that there was only wind in the bag whereas they had felt there would have been treasure.

Many candidates were unable to provide any example of a precise example. They often wrote of his good leadership in general. These candidates tended to have given a very general answer in Question 17(a).

Question 18

- 18 Explain **three** ways that Aeolia **and** its inhabitants interest the reader in this passage.

-

 -

 -

- [6]

As with Question 16, the best answers were seen from candidates who gave three precise references and opinions on these. Many candidates commented on the strange incestuous relationship of the family, the magical aspects in the passage and the wealth and luxury on the island.

Some candidates tended to simply rephrase the question as part of their analysis. Analysis was often along the lines of a phrase being interesting as it makes the reader think. This was seen as too vague to be credited.

There were numerous comments about the deathless gods. Examiners were looking for a little more in the analysis than that this is interesting as it mentions the gods.

There was a relative lack of comments about the bag itself, which was a prime area for comments. However, there was plenty of other material that candidates did select.

Question 19

Study Source G

19 'The stranger.' (Kline line 2) / 'Our guest.' (Rieu line 3).

Give one detail that this person had told Penelope about his background.

.....

..... [1]

Many candidates used the line in the passage where Penelope noted the beggar claimed to be of good stock. Examiners decided this was a valid response.

Candidates who took the more expected approach often commented that he had seen Odysseus or that he was from Crete. Weaker responses had difficulty in realising the purpose of his tale and often wrote that he told her he was a beggar.

Question 20

20 Why do you think Penelope is regarded as an admirable character? Use the passage as a starting point and your own knowledge in your answer.

.....

.....

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.....

.....

..... [8]

There were some excellent responses seen to this question. Examiners were impressed at how well candidates used the passage for ideas. There were widespread references to Penelope's generosity and outspokenness, which warranted further praise from some in her speaking up as a woman to the suitors.

Many also commented positively on the use of the epithet "wise" in the passage. This often led to discussion about her weaving trick (many had difficulty recalling exactly what she was weaving). Most also mentioned her loyalty to Odysseus.

While for many, this was the limit of their discussion, the best responses also found extra ideas in her obedience to her son, her control over her maids and her modesty before the suitors. Such comments were often the deciding factor as to whether a candidate achieved a mark in the top band for the question. Also impressive was the knowledge that a small number of candidates showed from non-prescribed books, such as the bed test.

A few candidates wasted time by giving arguments as to why they did not admire Penelope. This was not what the question asked.

Question 21 (a)

Study Source H

- 21 (a) Eurycleia is called 'wise' (Kline line 1) / 'sensible' (Rieu line 1). What Homeric literary technique is this an example of?

.....
 [1]

This question was answered very well.

Question 21 (b)

- (b) Why do you think Eurycleia is called 'wise' (Kline) / 'sensible' (Rieu) on this occasion?

.....
 [1]

Examiners insisted on candidates being able to show an understanding of what had taken place immediately before the passage. Those who knew that Odysseus had threatened Eurycleia if she revealed his identity nearly always went on to gain the mark. Many felt that she was wise as she had realised Odysseus' identity, but this was felt not to be close enough in time to the passage.

Question 22

- 22 Eurycleia calls Odysseus 'my child'. Why do you think she does this? Make **two** points.

-
 -
- [2]

It was encouraging to see that most candidates knew that Eurycleia had been Odysseus' nurse. Many also commented on how they had a close relationship and that she acted like a mother to him.

There were some very perceptive responses that felt the comment might have been said to reassure and calm Odysseus after his outburst of anger.

A common view was that she called him a child as she was much older than him. This was not credited as the elderly do not generally call a middle-aged adult a child. However, the question was generally answered well.

Question 23

23 'The *Odyssey* would be better without the gods.' How far do you agree with this statement? [15]

This question was attempted by around two-thirds of candidates. Answers were slightly weaker than the other extended response questions; approximately 8% of candidates achieved a top band mark (13 or more) in this question, whereas around 10–14% achieved top band marks for other optional questions.

Most candidates were able to give a range of examples of the actions of the gods. Athene was the most heavily discussed deity. Better responses rattled off examples briefly, while weaker ones tended to give one example that was explained in unnecessary detail that added little. Some essays did not have enough references to the text to create a well-founded argument.

As ever with a question on the gods, many candidates turned it into "how do the gods help and hinder Odysseus?" While this is clearly important for AO1, such responses often had limited evaluation. Many answers also focused too heavily on how the gods drive the plot forward. This is a good AO2 idea, but often this idea was repeated throughout the essay.

Better answers spoke of how involvement from the gods boosted his heroic nature and added to the fantasy of the book. These often correctly identified the gods as agents of justice. Many reasonably felt that they made the story a little predictable or interfered too much.

| <i>Better responses</i> | <i>Weaker responses</i> |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gave precise and detailed examples of the involvement of the gods • Used a range of gods, including Circe who featured relatively rarely in answers • Gave a range of ideas on how they improved or weakened the plot • Introduced examples from wider reading of the <i>Odyssey</i> • Answered the question thematically | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talked more generally (e.g. Athene helped Odysseus in the battle in the hall) • Limited their examples to Athene and Poseidon • Tended to use similar evaluation for each example • Evaluation focused too heavily on what would have happened if the gods had not been involved • Answered the question on a god by god basis |

Question 24

24 'Books 21 and 22 are a fitting climax to the *Odyssey*.' How far do you agree with this statement?
[15]

There were some very mixed responses to this question, but in general the standard was relatively pleasing. Many candidates had good ideas relating to justice, characterisation and tension. These were often well backed up with evidence. It was interesting to read how the same evidence produced very different opinions; some felt the books were tense, such as when the suitors get weapons, while others felt it lacked tension, citing the involvement of Athene and Zeus meaning that they knew Odysseus would win.

Some candidates produced a very one-sided argument, not seeking to say in any way that the climax was not fitting. While this is a perfectly valid response, candidates are encouraged to try and argue for and against a statement as it tends to produce a more balanced essay. Relatively few commented on the loose ends that still remained at the end of Book 22, such as the reunion of Penelope and Odysseus. Indeed, a significant number wrote of a reunion happening in Book 22.

**AfL**

To aid candidates to argue both ways, get them to write two separate answers or sets of preparatory notes to a question. One of these can only argue in support of a statement and one can only argue against. Then get them to conflate the ideas into one final piece of work. This could be equally well done in the form of a debate, followed up by a written task.

While candidates often had good AO2, a lot struggled to give a range of detailed facts from the two books. Virtually all talked of the battle in the hall, but examiners were looking for specific details such as the death of Antinous or the killing of the slaves at the end. Similarly, it was not enough to talk vaguely about the preparations for the battle in Book 21. In general, candidates could have given a few more precise facts about specific incidents in this book, rather than a broad overview.

**Misconception**

Many candidates had problems distinguishing the events of Book 19 from Book 21. There were numerous instances of candidates referring to Eurykleia's recognition of Odysseus or the meeting of Penelope in discussions. Candidates clearly need to be clear on which events occur in which book.

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