

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

CLASSICAL GREEK

H444

For first teaching in 2016

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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 4 series overview

In the second year of this paper's current incarnation the overall level of performance was again very high: the vast majority of candidates had clearly worked very hard on their set texts, which many seemed to know in minute detail. Candidates produced thorough, accurate and lengthy responses to all the different types of question that were set, and there was only very occasional evidence that a candidate may have run out of time, usually because s/he had spent too much time on the smaller-tariff questions and could not do complete justice to the essay question in Section C.

It is in the nature of reports like these when discussing individual questions to focus on the things that candidates did less well, so it should be borne in mind throughout this report that, on the whole, the standard of candidates' performance on this paper was excellent. (The less successful candidates, who were very few in number, were those who clearly had not spent much time getting to know their texts, at least not in Greek.)

Section A overview

There are three different types of question in Section A: five-mark questions which invite candidates to translate a few lines of the Greek passage printed on the paper; fifteen-mark questions which ask candidates to take a more substantial passage and comment on how the author uses the content and language of that passage to produce a certain effect or to reveal something about his characters; and smaller, fairly straightforward, questions on the content and/or context of a passage or part of a passage. By and large, this year's candidates produced good responses to all three types of question, and there was little evidence of problems with time, although a number did write lengthier and more comprehensive answers than had been expected for the small-tariff questions, over-earning the number of marks available.

The responses to the fifteen-mark questions were largely successful. Occasionally a candidate was obviously just writing whatever s/he knew or could think to say about the passage, and not relating his/her comments to the question being asked particularly well. Others were a little too hung up on making clever stylistic points, which unfortunately often came over as rather forced or tenuous, and some of these candidates also did not demonstrate that they fully understood the meaning of the excerpts about which they were making such points. Candidates would be advised to remember in the future that the content of the passage is at least as important as the style.

Candidates who knew the texts less well would build up elaborate but usually unconvincing arguments based upon single well-known but often less significant words (like the personal pronouns and negatives in Q.2(b)) or phrases, rather than meatier examples in which the context, content and author's intent were clear. The most successful responses tended to be, as always, those which worked through the prescribed lines in a methodical manner from beginning to end, without failing to comment on any substantial area or major idea of the passage.

Question 1 (a)

- 1 Read the following passages and answer the questions.

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Homer, *Odyssey* X.206–223

- (a)* How does Homer create an atmosphere of dread and wonder in the passage above?

You should refer **both** to the content **and** to the language of the passage.

[15]

The key elements in this passage were the tension of the lottery and the subsequent mournful reaction of Odysseus' men, the mismatch of Circe's palace with its setting, the unnatural behaviour of the animals, and the description of Circe herself. The best answers featured all of these things. One or two candidates were confused by the simile in lines 11-12, and thought that the lions and wolves had been turned into dogs. A more substantial number of candidates did not realise that θεάων in line 17 was plural, and thought that Homer was talking about the works 'of the goddess' (= Circe) rather than comparing her works with those 'of goddesses' ('such as are the works of goddesses')

Question 1 (b)

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Homer, *Odyssey* X.275–295

(b) Translate ἀλλ' ὅτε ... ἤβη (lines 1–5).

[5]

Candidates impressed here: very few made the mistakes anticipated in the mark scheme, and no one seemed fazed by difficult words such as χρυσόρραπες or ὑπηγήτη.

Question 1 (c)

(c) Lines 6–21 (ἐν τ' ἄρα ... μενεαίνων): how does Hermes behave towards Odysseus in these lines?

[6]

There were a number of points to be made here about what Hermes does for Odysseus and how he seems to interact with him, and most candidates managed to find six and exemplify them.

Question 2 (a)

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Sophocles, *Antigone* 531–551

(a) Translate σὺ δ' ... εἰδέναι; (lines 1–5).

[5]

More candidates missed out ἦ in line 1 than translated it. Given the jerky syntax of this excerpt, this was classified as a minor error. This meant that, unless the candidate in question made other mistakes, s/he would still receive five marks.

Question 2 (b)

(b)* Lines 6–21 (δέδρακα ... γελῶ): show how Sophocles vividly reveals the emotions of the two sisters in this dialogue.

You should refer **both** to the content **and** to the language of the passage.

[15]

Some candidates concentrated a little too much on the use of first and second person pronouns in this passage. Indeed there are some points which could reasonably be made, e.g. about the placement of ἐγώ in line 17, but given the context it is hard to imagine how this passage would have looked if it had not contained a few personal pronouns! Other candidates pointed out that Antigone was using a number of negatives, but they did not contextualise them: this kind of tactic is often a smokescreen for a weak grasp of the text. A curious recurring feature was that candidates would make a virtue of the fact that δέδρακα τοῦργον was in the perfect tense, and yet translate the phrase as 'I did the deed' rather than 'I have done the deed'. On the whole, there were some impressive responses to this question.

Exemplar 1

The first three times Ismene speaks in this passage, she uses "σου" - (with), for example, "συμμετέλω" - (I take share in) and "συμπλοῦν" - (comrade) and "σὺν σοὶ" - (with you). All of these express that he wants unity between them and for Ismene to be with Antigone. This is also emphasised by the juxtaposition of "σου" and "σοὶ", and again later ~~the~~ with the juxtaposition of "μοι" - (me) and "σοι" - (you), as this is a visual representation of how Ismene wants to be beside Antigone.

Antigone is shown to strongly oppose Ismene joining her. First of all ^{Antigone} she mentions that justice, "ἡ δίκη", will not allow Ismene this, then she says ~~that~~, "οὐτ' ἰθέλησας οὐτ' ἐγὼ κοινωσάμην".

-(neither did you wish it nor did I share it). This balanced phrase ~~with~~ of 'οὐτ' ... οὐτε' ~~and~~ - (neither... nor) and the endings "- ες" - (you) and "- εμεν" - (I), along with the personification of justice, shows the Antigone strongly feels Ismene shouldn't bare the blame, as she is backing her point up from all key areas - Ismene herself, Antigone and the gods.

This response got better afterwards, but it started less well. There is obviously something in the reference to the preposition/prefix συν/ξυμ-, but the candidate is vague on the contexts in which these instances occur, and then uses pronouns, negatives and even person endings of verbs to construct a point which is not ultimately convincing, without (apart from one substantial citation) giving any hint that the candidate really knows what the text means in detail.

Question 2 (c)

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Sophocles, *Antigone* 568–579

(c) What attitude does Creon show towards women in this passage?

[6]

Provided that candidates knew and used the whole passage, there were a number of points that could be made on this question, and the majority of candidates managed to achieve full marks. Possibly the subtlest point, which many candidates saw, was that Creon orders the sisters to be taken 'inside' (where women belong, if you are in Athens in the fifth century BC).

Section B overview

As in Section A, there are three different types of question in Section B: five-mark questions which invite candidates to translate a few lines of the Greek passage printed on the paper; fifteen-mark questions which ask candidates to take a more substantial passage and comment on how the author uses the content and language of that passage to produce a certain effect or to reveal something about his characters; and smaller, fairly straightforward, questions on the content and/or context of a passage or part of a passage. By and large, this year's candidates produced good responses to all three types of question, and there was little evidence of problems with time, although a number did write lengthier and more comprehensive answers than had been expected for the small-tariff questions, over-earning the number of marks available.

The responses to the fifteen-mark questions were largely successful. Occasionally a candidate was obviously just writing whatever s/he knew or could think to say about the passage, and not relating his/her comments to the question being asked particularly well. Others were a little too hung up on making clever stylistic points, which unfortunately often came over as rather forced or tenuous, and some of these candidates also did not demonstrate that they fully understood the meaning of the excerpts about which they were making such points. Candidates would be advised to remember in the future that the content of the passage is at least as important as the style.

Candidates who knew the texts less well would build up vaguer answers based upon single well-known words or phrases, rather than meatier examples in which the context, content and author's intent were clear; for example, there were a number who said on Q.4(a) that Creon was 'using lots of words in the semantic/lexical field of money'. The most successful responses tended to be, as always, those which worked through the prescribed lines in a methodical manner from beginning to end, without failing to comment on any substantial area or major idea of the passage.

Question 3 (a)

3 Read the following passages and answer the questions.

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Homer, *Odyssey* IX.287–306

- (a)** Lines 1–6 (ὡς ἐφάμην ... μυελόεντα): what details in these lines particularly contribute to the horror of this scene? **[5]**

There were a number of details that candidates could discuss here, from the obvious gory ones to other, subtler ones (οὐδὲν ἀμείβετο ... ἀλλ' ὃ γ' ἀναΐξας), and few candidates did not gain five marks.

Question 3 (b)

- (b)** Translate ἡμεῖς ... μῆλων (lines 7–11). **[5]**

Many (but certainly not all) candidates missed ἐπ' in line 10, but this was classified as a minor error, and so the majority of candidates still achieved five marks on this question. Perplexingly, several candidates translated the present participles in that line as past participles, although one can see why they did not bother to make the distinction, as both sounded fine in English.

Question 3 (c)

- (c)** Lines 12–19 (τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ ... δῖαν): what insights do these lines give into the character of Odysseus? **[4]**

Most candidates came up with four good details here.

Question 3 (d)

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Homer, *Odyssey* IX.447–460

(d)* What impression of Polyphemus is conveyed in this passage?

You should refer **both** to the content **and** to the language of the passage.

[15]

The main point to be made here was that we see two contrasting sides of Polyphemus: the gentle shepherd who talks to his favourite ram and the violent, vengeful monster. Other points that candidates made were that he shows great knowledge of the habits of his flock, and that he also comes over as rather stupid, given that he is still falling for the Οὔτις trick – particularly in line 14, τά μοι οὔτιδανὸς πόρεν Οὔτις. Most candidates (rightly) made a great deal of ὕστατος ... πρῶτος ... πρῶτος ... πρῶτος ... πανύστατος in lines 2-6, but some forgot to (or could not) provide the other detail required to contextualise this stylistic point.

Question 4 (a)

4 Read the following passages and answer the questions.

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Sophocles, *Antigone* 289–303

(a)* What impression of Creon is conveyed in this passage?

You should refer **both** to the content **and** to the language of the passage.

[15]

All candidates painted a convincing picture of Creon's paranoia and obsession with bribery and corruption, and many relished the irony of ἐξέπισταμαι καλῶς given that he thought the person behind the burial was a man. The occasional phrase that was a little too tricky for a candidate to translate was omitted; otherwise, coverage of the passage was impressively comprehensive.

Exemplar 2

Creon is also shown as harsh and unmoving from his principles, even through his distaste for those who work for bribes. Creon gives no consideration to any other alternative reason why the body was buried, and focusses entirely on the corruption that money causes, showing that he is stubborn and unmoving in his beliefs. Furthermore the word choice in this passage is particularly harsh, with words such as 'kakos' - evil - and 'ποταει' - it destroys - being placed emphatically at the beginning of the lines. The use of the word "καταφρονει" and the figura etymologica of "κατος επον" following creates an exaggerated tone of hatred and disdain for those who take bribes, and combined with the rather harsh word "μολοφρονει" - which is elsewhere found only in prose and carries a perjorative sense, the tone and language Creon uses create the impression of an angry and bitter man who is incredibly stubborn and unflinching in his beliefs.

This section of the candidate's response to this question gives no detailed sense of what is being said in the corresponding passage of Greek, making vague references to 'harsh' vocabulary and shoehorning in a couple of 'stylistic' points which are not very effective, deprived as they are of a detailed context.

Exemplar 3

Sophocles continues his presentation of Creon as arrogant and also sententious, as Creon states that 'οὐδέν ... κακὸν νόμον' (no evil tradition) 'ἐβλαστῇ' (grew up) among 'ἄνθρωποιον' (humans) like silver. Creon forcefully conveys his confidence through the word 'οὐδέν' (no or nothing) which is very emphatic and is also placed at a strong position at the beginning of the line. However, Creon's use of ~~the~~ what can be read as a gnomic aorist, 'ἐβλαστῇ', and the word 'ἄνθρωποιον', which is very vague and general, betrays the fact that he is making a sweeping and unsubstantiated statement.

Creon elaborates on the evils of money using a forceful rising tricolon, thus betraying his

arrogance and single-mindedness. He says that money 'πρὸς πόλεις πορθεῖ' (sacks cities), showing us with the alliteration of the letter 'π' conveying his harsh disapproval of this. The word 'πορθεῖ' (sacks), emphatically placed at the beginning of the line, personifies the money and makes it even more forceful. Creon then says that it 'ἐνδραγ ἐξαρσενον δόμων' (expels men from their homes), with the word order here mimetic of the separation. Creon finishes with the longest and most important part of the tricolon, saying that money 'ἐκδιδασκεῖ' (teaches) and 'καταλλοσεῖ' (perverts) the useful minds of mortals to become involved with 'αἰσχρὰ πράγματα' (disgraceful deeds). The proximity of 'χρημας' (useful) and 'αἰσχρὰ' (disgraceful) highlights Creon's anger and the change and corruption caused by money.

Creon continues with his diatribe against money, conveying his anger and his confidence in himself. He states that money 'ἐδείξε' (showed) how to have 'παρανομίας' (villainies) and how to become familiar with the 'δυσσεβείαν' (impiety) of 'παντός ἔργου' (every deed). The position of 'παρανομίας' (villainies) at

the beginning of the line strongly emphasises this word and conveys Creon's anger towards it. The semi-polyptoton of 'παισιν' and 'παισιν ἐπὶ τοῖς' (every dead) strongly emphasises both Creon's wrath towards this and how obsessed he is with this idea, as he cannot get it out of his head. The word 'ἑρπετοῖς' (impurity) is very forceful, and this feeling is furthered by the extreme and hyperbolic nature of 'παντα' (all or every).

This section from another candidate's response, discussing the same lines as Exemplar 2, is more successful, as it makes it reassuringly obvious to the reader that the candidate knows what the text means, and in some detail. Helpful translations are provided, and the stylistic points are a lot more successful (even if one does not subscribe fully to all of them) because they are related precisely to an explicitly stated context

Question 4 (b) (i)

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Sophocles, *Antigone* 450–470

(b) Lines 1–17 (οὐ γάρ ... ἄλγος):

- (i) in lines 1–8 (οὐ γάρ ... 'φάνη), what reasons does Antigone give for not obeying Creon's proclamation? [5]

The majority of candidates gained full marks on this question.

Question 4 (b) (ii)

- (ii) in lines 11–17 (θανουμένη ... ἄλγος), what reasons does Antigone give for not fearing the consequences of her actions? [4]

This question, too, was straightforward, and few marks were dropped. A handful of candidates commented unnecessarily on τούτων ... δώσειν (lines 9–11), which was not specified in the lemma.

Question 4 (c)

- (c) Translate ἀλλ' ἄν ... ὀφλισκάνω (lines 17–21). [5]

This is a difficult passage to translate literally and elegantly, and candidates far exceeded expectations. A few did not seem to know what to do with τυγχάνειν in line 20, and one or two translated ἡνεσχόμην in line 18 as 'left' rather than 'allowed', 'endured', *vel sim*. However, most candidates scored at least four marks.

Question 5 (a)

5 Read the following passages and answer the questions.

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Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 17–42

(a)* Lines 1–20 (ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἐπώποτ' ... ἀπῆν): how does Aristophanes make Dicaeopolis' complaints about the city lively and humorous?

You should refer **both** to the content **and** to the language of the passage.

[15]

Relatively few candidates answered on Aristophanes, but in general they gave a very good account of this passage.

Question 5 (b)

(b) Translate νῦν οὖν ... ὥστίζεται (lines 21–26).

[5]

Few if any of the candidates dropped a mark on this translation.

Question 5 (c) (i)

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Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 370–382

- (c) (i) Lines 1–7 (καίτοι ... δακεῖν): what are the things which are making Dicaeopolis worry in these lines? [4]

This question was generally well answered.

Question 5 (c) (ii)

- (ii) Lines 8–13 (αὐτός ... μολυνοπραγμονούμενος): explain what Dicaeopolis is referring to here. [3]

Candidates who offer Aristophanes need to know enough background information to explain the jokes or the points that the characters are making, and this year's candidates had clearly done their homework, giving chapter and verse on Cleon's prosecution of Aristophanes over *Babylonians*.

Question 5 (c) (iii)

- (iii) What step does Dicaeopolis take next to help him overcome the problems he is anticipating? [2]

This was a straightforward context question requiring the information that Dicaeopolis goes to Euripides to borrow some rags, in order to elicit a more sympathetic reaction from his audience. This did not pose any problems for the candidates.

Section C overview

The twenty-mark essay questions were handled well, although occasionally it was evident that a candidate was regurgitating a previously-written essay on the text which was not an exact match for the question being asked on the paper: for example, there were some *Antigone* essays which merely discussed the rights and wrongs of Antigone's and Creon's positions without considering how sympathetic the characters were, either not mentioning sympathy at all, or merely paying lip service to it in the introduction and conclusion of their essay and at occasional points in between. Examiners were looking for a thorough analysis of the question and thorough knowledge of the text, preferably expressed at least in part in the form of quotations (in Greek or English – most candidates quote in English) or detailed paraphrase. There were some responses which fell a little short as they relied too heavily on reporting the incidents of the text in order to answer the question with relatively little attention paid to what the characters actually say. One or two candidates may have thought that quoting random Greek words which were not tied to the point being made fulfilled the 'quotation quota' – quotations must be pertinent.

Question 6

6* How heroic is Odysseus in *Odyssey* IX and X?

[20]

The most interesting answers tried to define what definition or definitions the candidate was going to use, for example 'traditional κλέος-obsessed epic warrior' or '21st-century sensible and caring hero'. This often led to the same incidents being interpreted both positively and negatively – for example, when Odysseus reveals his true name to the Cyclops. Occasionally a candidate would slide into an 'Is Odysseus a good leader?' essay, which is part of the question, but not all of it.

Question 7

7* For whom do you have more sympathy in *Antigone*: Creon or Antigone?

[20]

As stated above, some candidates ended up discussing which character was in the right and which in the wrong, which is relevant to the question but not the only factor to be considered. Again, the really interesting answers looked at questions such as whether a twenty-first century audience will sympathise more with Antigone (a woman!) than the fifth century BC Athenian one.

Question 8

8* Looking at Dicaeopolis in *Acharnians*, what would you say were the characteristics of the Aristophanic hero?

[20]

There were some interesting responses to this question. Some candidates just knew *Acharnians* really well, and drew appropriate conclusions from that. Others had clearly done a lot of background reading on Aristophanic comedy which was employed profitably in their responses.

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