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Examiners' report

LATIN

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Contents

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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.

Section A overview

Section A: Comprehension and Grammar

As last year, around 70% of candidates answered this section. The sections used in the questions were mostly quite long and candidates should be encouraged to take the time to digest the whole of each section as opposed to picking out first.

In a Comprehension exercise such as this, unlike a Translation paper, a response is either right or it is wrong: answers which are close, even including some of the correct words, do not show *comprehension* of what is being read and therefore do not count. The time allowed should be generous enough to allow for a thorough reading of the passage *before* answers are committed to paper – exactly as recommended in the heading for this section.

Many produced answers to the grammar questions which were at variance with their responses earlier to the same parts of the passage. Candidates perhaps need a nudge to make use of the grammar questions as an opportunity to revisit their responses to the Comprehension questions, rather than viewing them as something quite detached from the main part of the exercise.

Question 1

1 In lines 1–3 (*hoc ipsum ... constituebant*), how did the behaviour of the barbarians show that Roman authority had been weakened before Trajan became emperor? **[5]**

The stronger responses engaged well with this question. The barbarians' insistence on treaties offering equal/ fair terms and on their ability to choose their own laws was generally grasped well. Mishandling of *certabant* ('were certain'), however, in many responses made understanding of what followed difficult and there was a strong tendency to render *imperium* wrongly as 'emperor' and *contempserant* as 'hated'.

Question 2

2 Translate *at nunc illis rediit ... victoriis* (lines 4–6).
Please write your translation on alternate lines. **[10]**

The simple inversion of the subject in *rediit terror et metus et votum* and again in *quibus gloriam dederunt campi ... et maria* caused issues for some candidates, and teachers would be well advised to demonstrate the working of this rhetorical idiom to students. If they had stuck to the grammar of what they saw here and put less store by word-order, the basic framework might have emerged more easily. Other common misconceptions included *rediit* (often read as present tense or translated as 'he has returned'), *imperata* taken as 'emperor' (again) rather than related to *imperare*, *campi* ('camps') and failure to recognise the plural of *mare*. Where this occurred, the overall response became more limited as a result.

Question 3

> **3** In lines 6–9 (*nunc ergo ... negatum est*), what signs are there that Roman authority has been restored since the start of Trajan's reign?   **[8]**

There was a wide range of responses here, but it was pleasing that many candidates successfully negotiated some tricky hurdles. A clear grasp of the majority of the sense was what examiners were looking for, even if smaller details, such as Pliny's use of the present tense, sometimes fell below the radar. As elsewhere on this paper, solid knowledge of common vocabulary was an enormous advantage: common weakness were *obsides*, confusion between 'buy' or 'sell ' or even 'send' for *emimus,* inappropriate meanings (e.g. 'duties') chosen for *muneribus,* and *queri,* which was often muddled with *quaerere* – even by some who correctly identified it as a deponent in Question 7(b).

Question 4

> **4** *quis enim audeat ... gaudebant* (lines 9–14): what does Pliny say to show the difficulties Trajan had to face **and** his success in overcoming them?   **[8]**

As in the handling of Question 3, examiners put a premium on production of sense rather than correct rendering of individual words and it was by no means essential that every word or phrase would come out perfectly. Weaker candidates struggled with Pliny's jig-jagging between first and third persons, causing confusion throughout regarding who was invading whom. Relying hopefully on writing an undefined 'they' did not solve this problem. Some did not fully engage with the text and the issues contained within – such as that Trajan was 'very friendly' (*amicissimum*) to the barbarians, or that the army (or Trajan) was carrying huge blocks of ice on its back. Vocabulary seemed less the root of the problem here than staying faithful to the grammar, but few knew *latebris* (often linked with *latus, lateris*) and even fewer could make anything of *vices temporum*.

Exemplar 1

He ~~says~~ asks who therefore ~~may~~ dare, who ~~is~~ to know that Trojan has invaded a most fierce people at ~~a~~ time itself which ~~is~~ is most friendly to the barbarians but is most difficult to the Romans; when Danubius joins its banks with frost ~~ill~~, and having been hardened with ice carries huge armies back~~across~~ across it when the wild people are ~~being~~ ~~~~ not being armed with greater weapons than ~~~~ their sky, ~~~~ their climate. But when ~~the~~ Trojan ~~was~~ in proximity, ~~~~ as if the rules of time could have ~~~~ been changed, ~~~~ ~~~~ ~~~~ certain among them were being held ~~~~ shut up in their hiding place; they were rejoicing that ~~the~~ Romans had not gone through their banks.

> The following is an example of a response which, although certainly not free from errors, showed a firm grasp of the passage to deserve full credit.

Question 5

5   *aliena occasione usi hiemem suam hostibus inferebant* (line 14): explain in your own words what
you think Pliny means by this.   **[4]**

Four elements here needed explaining: *aliena*, *occasione usi*, *hiemem hostibus inferebant*, and *suam*. Of these candidates most frequently suggested something plausible for the third – whether literally turning winter on the enemy or metaphorically inflicting a *blitzkrieg*. Even good ideas here, however, tended to push *suam* aside without comment. Some students found *aliena* challenging to interpret – even though English 'alien' might have provided a good lead – and others took *occasione,* a notorious 'false friend', as 'occasion' rather than 'opportunity'.

To illustrate what examiners were looking for, here follow two rather different examples of careful and imaginative thinking, both of which qualified for full marks:

Exemplar 2

Pliny praises the Romans as they are able to use the unknown situation to their advantage against the enemy. afflict the enemy with their own winter, which should have impeded the Romans.

Exemplar 3

Perhaps Pliny is pointing out the irony that it was the Romans who utilised the winter, previously a weapon of their opponents, against their enemies. The Romans managed to use this unusual opportunity against their enemy, thus reversing the roles, and creating their 'own winter'. It may also be somewhat euphemistic - implying that many barbarians were killed in this 'winter'.

Question 6 (a), (b) and (c)

6 State and explain the case of the following:

    (a) *quibus* (line 5)   **[2]**

    (b) *eo ipso tempore* (lines 9–10)   **[2]**

    (c) *exercitus* (line 11)   **[2]**

Of these three examples, (b) was generally recognised as ablative and (mostly) explained correctly as 'point of time' or 'time when': however, simply saying 'a time phrase' was not judged precise enough. (a) was correctly explained as the dative, indirect object of *dederunt,* and translations which made this clear, even if not entirely correct in other respects, were accepted equally. Some read *exercitus* as nominative singular without attempting to appraise it in the context of the sentence as a whole.

Question 7 (a), (b) and (c)

7 Which part of the verb are the following:

    (a) *faciendi* (line 4)?   **[1]**

    (b) *queri* (line 8)?   **[1]**

    (c) *invadisse* (line 9)?   **[1]**

It was pleasing to find that most candidates could distinguish the present and perfect (or 'past') infinitives, even when one was a deponent. Those who described *queri* as passive (as its formation certainly is) were allowed the mark. Those who analysed *invadisse* as a non-existent imperfect or pluperfect infinitive were not credited. There was often little correlation between the answer supplied here and the treatment of *faciendi* in the translation offered for Question 2.

Question 8 (a) and (b)

8 Give the present active infinitive of the following:

    (a) *contempserant* (line 1)   **[1]**

    (b) *clausi* (line 13)   **[1]**

Of the two infinitives, *claudere* came out fairly regularly - although some put it into the wrong conjugation. The formation of *contemnere* seemed challenging for many, as was its meaning in answer to Question 1. Candidates do need to make sure they engage with the question set, as a small number supplied the first person of the verb, rather than the requested infinitive.

Question 9 (a) and (b)

9   Explain, using a translation if you think it is helpful, the grammar of the following:

    (a) *sciat* (line 9)   **[2]**

    (b) *mutatae essent* (line 13)   **[2]**

The two subjunctive verbs were often recognised correctly, even though the two parts of *mutatae essent* were surprisingly often interpreted as separate items (past participle + imperfect subjunctive), suggesting lack of familiarity with the very common form of the pluperfect subjunctive. Explanations of the subjunctives, however, were generally more limited. Only a minority recognised the meaning of *quasi* and few came close to interpreting *sciat* in context as either generic ('anyone who knew ...') or maybe causal ('since he knew ...') or conditional ('if he knew ...').

Section B

Section B: Prose Composition

Question 10

The most successful candidates are those who concentrate on getting the standard grammar and vocabulary right rather than experimenting with unsure alternatives, especially if these are no real improvement on the basics or are gratuitous additions uncalled for by the original English. Opportunities for more stylish writing – idiomatic phrases, for example, or the choice or positioning of particular words – were fairly easy to find: most responses merited at least 2 or 3, and many earned all of the 5 marks available.

(i) *After the death of his son Drusus, Tiberius left Rome and never returned.*

The opening sentence was generally done accurately, and many incorporated some idiomatic subordination, justifying two or even three early style marks.

(ii) *He planned to live on Capri, where he had had a magnificent palace constructed at the very end of the island.*

For 'he planned' *voluit* was a little too spare to bring out the full sense: *constituerat* was a step forward, and even better were idioms such as *in animo habebat* or *consilium habebat*. 'Had had constructed' was frequently negotiated with pleasing skill, via either *curare* + gerundive or a paraphrase such as *effecerat, imperaverat ut*, although inevitably some did not see the difference between 'had constructed' and 'had had constructed'. 'At the very end of', however, was less proficiently handled, with adjectival agreements sometimes adrift and many resorting to inappropriate vocabulary such as *ultissimus*.

(iii) *He particularly liked this place because it was surrounded by high cliffs and could only be reached from one tiny harbour.*

There were various ways of handling 'particularly' and 'liked' – some (e.g. *hic locus ei plurimum placabat*) more deserving of a style mark than others (e.g. *hunc locum multum amabat*). Many otherwise respectable versions were marred by elementary errors, such as the wrong declension for *portu*, the gender of *locus*, an unwanted preposition before the instrumental ablative *rupibus altis,* and the non-existent superlative *parvissimo*

(iv) There is a story that a fisherman once climbed with great effort to the top of the cliffs ...

Several approaches did the job for 'there is a story' – *dicitur*, *narratur* and *fama est* being among the simplest – and this section was generally well done, even though the standard way of conveying 'to the top of' in Latin seemed less familiar than expected.

(v) *... carrying a huge mullet to offer the emperor as a gift.*

Snags here including forgetting to carry the accusative of the indirect speech on to 'carrying', accusative rather than dative for 'emperor' (who sometimes became a king instead), and over-simplification of 'to offer (it) as a gift'. To get round the correct, but clumsy, *ut eum ut donum offerret* some put together much more likely phrasings, such as *quem principi ut donum offerret* or *quod donum principi offerret,* which certainly merited a bonus for idiomatic writing.

(vi) *Tiberius however was so worried that this path would be revealed to everyone ...*

Crucial here was to recognise a fearing clause and know the appropriate way to construct it. Fortunately, most did, and the best knew about *adeo* and even *veritus est* too. In less assured responses, 'everyone' became only a single person and some subjunctives were scarcely recognisable as imperfect or passive.

(vii) ... that he rubbed the poor man's face with the fish. Wounded by its sharp scales ...

The result clause was usually picked up and it was pleasing to see so many correctly formed perfect subjunctives. Errors here were mainly caused by struggling for the appropriate vocabulary: 'face' had some strange variants, *pisce* was out of reach for quite a number (although *mullo* made a reasonable stop-gap), and *acer* or *acerbus* were not quite the same thing as 'sharp' (*acutus*). Here again there was also frequently an unwanted preposition for the instrumental 'by its sharp scales'.

(viii) *... he cried 'Thank heavens that I didn't bring the lobster I caught yesterday.'*

Unexpectedly many candidates seemed unfamiliar with the idiom *gratias agere* (common in several elementary Latin courses), but several substitutes showed flair (*di immortales! gaudeo ...* being one of the more memorable). For what followed, however, many made the false assumption that the accusative + infinitive was the natural construction, rather than a causal clause introduced, for example, by *quod*, and there was a tendency to slip carelessly into the third person for the verbs 'brought' and 'caught'. On the plus side, it was good to see so many stylishly postpone 'he cried' until after the speech had started, and only a very few gave *lacrimavit*.

(ix) *Tiberius immediately ordered the lobster to be fetched too and he used it in the same way.*

The Latin writing here often gave an appealing sense of a carefully composed conclusion. It was pleasing to find the indirect command construction used correctly and *usus est* generally both formed correctly and accompanied by the ablative. Less convincing were versions phrased in such a way that Tiberius was apparently telling the lobster to fetch itself, or watered down 'in the same way' to no more than *ita,* perhaps to avoid having to decline *idem* so as to agree with *modus*.

Exemplar 4

10. Tiberius, filio Druso mortuo, Romae egressus numquam regressus est. statuit habitare in Capreis, in quibus ei magnifica regia aedificata in ultimo fine insulae erat. quam valde amavit quod rupibus altis circumventam solum ab uno minimo portu perveniri poterat. dicitur olim piscatorem magno cum labore ad summas rupes ascendere portantem ingentem mullum qui imperatori donum esset. Tiberius tamen tam timidus erat ne hanc semitam omnibus monstratam esset ut cum pisce vultum miseri viri tereret. cuius ferocibus squamis vulneratus 'gratias ago,' clamavit, 'divibus ne locustam heri raptam tulerim!' Tiberius non solum statim imperavit ei locustam referre sed etiam eam in eodem modo usus est.

Two complete scripts are provided as samples of what is achieved by candidates who offer Prose Composition. The first – a very proficient and careful response, with only a few minor shortcomings.

Exemplar 5

Tiberius, suo nato, Druso nomineg mortuo, Roma discedit

atque numquam rediit. in Caprea habitare constituit,

quod ibi ingentem regum aedificatum ad finitem insulae

habuerat. hoc locum praesertim amavit ~~quod~~ cum altis rupibus

cingabatur et ab uno modico porto solo id pervenire

~~posset~~ posset. narratur piscatorem, qui ingentem mullum regi

offerendi causa portaret, ad summum rupis cum magno

difficulto olim ascendere. Tiberius tamen tam ventus

est ne haec semita ~~~~ ab omnibus inventa sit ut se vultum

infelicis viris cum pisce tereret. vir, vulneris ab acutis

squamis piscis, exclamavit, 'caela laude! felix sum quod

locustam, quam hostidie captivi, non tulisti.' Tiberius

statim iussit locustam etiam latam esse idemque cum

locusta fecit.

The second example is clearly less assured, with minor errors in almost every section as well as several more fundamental syntactical faults, but still shows sufficient grasp of Latinity.

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