

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

CLASSICAL GREEK

J292

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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.

Paper 5 series overview

The overall standard was good. Candidates were usually accurate with translation, although understanding was not always so assured. Some candidates seemed to be caught off-guard by the first few questions, choosing the wrong line(s) from which to answer Question 1(a), and for Question 1(b) listing *what* Alcestis could have done with her life instead of giving a reason *why* she says this. Question 2 also proved to be a challenging question for different reasons; thus, a number of candidates did not seem to hit their stride until the translation question. The rest of the paper seemed to be comparatively straightforward and most candidates appeared to have plenty of time to write full answers to the extended questions (Questions 7 & 8).

Candidates should be encouraged to find time at the end of the exam to read through and check their answers. Mistakes and omissions are all too common when the brain races ahead of the pen, and a single omission can be costly, especially in the translation question (e.g. omission of $\gamma\upsilon\nu\eta$ as the only error would result in a mark of 4/5). Extended answers (Questions 7 & 8) were often littered with poor English ("I majoritively [sic] agree"; "conscrewed" = construed?), occasionally compounded by poor handwriting; Admetus and Alcestis were sometimes transposed, leading to confusion, and 'Aeneas' appeared more than once in the essay (Question 8).

Question 1 (a)

1 Read the passage and answer the questions.

ἐγὼ σε πρᾶσβέουσά κἀντὶ τῆς ἐμῆς
 ψυχῆς καταστήσασα φῶς τόδ' εἰσορᾶν
 θνήσκω, παρόν μοι μὴ θανεῖν, ὑπὲρ σέθεν,
 ἀλλ' ἄνδρα τε σχεῖν Θεσσαλῶν ὃν ἤθελον
 καὶ δῶμα ναίειν ὄλβιον τυραννίδι. 5

Euripides, *Alcestis*, lines 282–286

(a) ἐγὼ σε ... θνήσκω (lines 1–3): what does Alcestis say about her decision to die?

.....

.....

.....

..... [2]

This question, requiring no more than a clear paraphrase of what Alcestis says about her decision to die, should have been straightforward, but a number of candidates did not take note of the line references and took their answer from the remainder of line 3 (παρόν μοι μὴ θανεῖν, ὑπὲρ σέθεν). Where multiple questions are set on a single passage, candidates would be well advised to mark off the different sections on the question paper. It was not always clear also that candidates understood the expression φῶς εἰσορᾶν; “see the light i.e. die”, or similar, appeared in more than one paper.

Question 1 (b)

(b) παρόν ... τυραννίδι (lines 3–5): Alcestis suggests what she could have done with her life. Why do you think she says this?

.....

..... [1]

Most answers were along the lines of ‘She is showing her husband what she has sacrificed to save him’, which was perfectly acceptable. The Mark Scheme guidance allows for ‘valid alternatives’, but less obvious answers, such as ‘She is blackmailing her husband’, required some development or explanation to secure the mark.

Question 2

2 Read the passage and answer the question.

μόνος γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἦσθα, κοῦτις ἐλπίς ἦν
 σοῦ κατθανόντος ἄλλα φιτύσειν τέκνα.
 καγὼ τ' ἂν ἔζων καὶ σὺ τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον,
 κοῦκ ἂν μονωθεῖς σῆς δάμαρτος ἔστενες
 καὶ παῖδας ὠρφάνευες.

5

Translation:

*For you were their only child, and there was no hope
 that they would bear other children when you died.
 And then you and I would be living the rest of our life,
 and you would not be lamenting, left alone without your wife,
 and looking after orphan children.*

Euripides, *Alcestis*, lines 293–297

In this passage, how does Alcestis emphasise her disappointment at what has happened?

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

-

-

[4]

Despite the inclusion of a translation of the Greek passage in this question, candidates struggled to fully understand the context. Some had great difficulty explaining clearly the point about Admetus being an only child. Others were seemingly unaware of the ellipsis at line 3 ('If the parents had agreed to die for Admetus'), which led to some very confused, unclear answers.

Too often candidates were content simply to give examples of Alcestis' disappointment rather than showing *how* her disappointment is emphasised e.g. the emphatic position of *μόνος* or the strong negative idea of *οὔτις ἐλπίς*. Some candidates did well to mention the polysyndeton of *καγὼ ... καὶ ... κοῦκ ... καὶ* (lines 3–5) but did not add any context and so made a very lame point out of something which could have scored full marks. Such excessive brevity often reduces the worth of a style/language point, especially in the 8-mark question (see Question 7 below).

Exemplar 1

Alcestis also uses the repetition of the conditionals. 'av... xponov' and 'av ~~paon~~... εορευες'. He 'would not be laughing' and they 'would be living for the rest of their life'. These conditionals really show how much they are missing out on, which shows her disappointment.

Exemplar 1 illustrates good answer technique. The candidate has accurately identified two conditional clauses in the Greek and matched each clause with English from the translation given. The content is then used to illustrate aspects of Alcestis' disappointment in answer to the question.

Exemplar 2

She lists the consequences of Admetus' parents not agreeing to die for him. She says "καὶ ἔ' av εἴωv καὶ οὐ... xponov, κοικ ἄv μωvθεις... καὶ παρδεις ἰφθαλμες.. All these "ands" emphasise that she is disappointed in many ways.

Exemplar 2 illustrates weak response technique. The repetition of καί could, potentially, be a valid language point illustrating Alcestis' disappointment, but the inclusion of 'not' in the first line of the answer is a mistake and this seriously undermines the point the candidate is trying to make. Almost half the passage of Greek has been copied out but with no translation to give any context, and so the examiner is left with little more than a statement which says that lots of 'and's = disappointment.

Question 3

3 Read the passage and answer the question.

τούτους ἀνάσχου δεσπότης ἐμῶν δόμων
 καὶ μὴ 'πιγήμες τοῖσδε μητροιᾶν τέκνοις,
 ἦτις κακίων οὔσ' ἐμοῦ γυνὴ φθόνῳ
 τοῖς σοῖσι κάμοις παισὶ χεῖρα προσβαλεῖ.
 μὴ δῆτα δράσης ταῦτά γε, αἰτοῦμαι σ' ἐγώ. 5

Euripides, *Alcestis*, lines 304–308

Translate this passage into English.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [5]

The translation question was handled well by most candidates, although words such as γυνή or φθόνῳ were occasionally omitted. The force of the prefix in ἐπιγαμέω ('again/over') was not always recognised, and similarly the absence of any translation for the particles δῆτα and γε (line 5) was marked as an inconsequential error. 'Do violence', as a translation of χεῖρα προσβαλεῖ (line 4), was judged to be an unnecessary paraphrase and counted as an inconsequential error (because there was no specific mention of 'hand').

Question 4 (a)

4 Read the passage and answer the questions.

οἴσω δὲ πένθος οὐκ ἐτήσιον τὸ σὸν
 ἀλλ' ἔστ' ἄν αἰὼν σύμῳς ἀντέχη, γύναι,
 στυγῶν μὲν ἢ μ' ἔτικτεν, ἐχθαίρων δ' ἐμὸν
 πατέρα· λόγῳ γὰρ ἦσαν οὐκ ἔργῳ φίλοι.
 σὺ δ' ἀντιδοῦσα τῆς ἐμῆς τὰ φίλτατα 5
 ψυχῆς ἔσωσας.

Euripides, *Alcestis*, lines 336–341

(a) οἴσω δὲ ... γύναι (lines 1–2): pick out and translate a **Greek phrase** which suggests Admetus' sorrow will last a long time.

Greek phrase: English translation:

[2]

Most candidates managed to pick out and translate an appropriate Greek phrase. Some were unsure where the Greek for 'as long as my life lasts' begins and therefore quoted almost the whole line. This was just about acceptable, but it should be noted that where a superfluous word is included in the Greek (e.g. ἀλλ'), this has to be included in the translation to secure the second mark.

Question 4 (b)

(b) στυγῶν ... φίλοι (lines 3–4): how does Admetus emphasise his anger towards his parents? You should make **two** points, each supported by close reference to the Greek.

-
-

[4]

Whether making a content or a language point, candidates should refer to the Greek and preferably to the single word or phrase that carries the point, rather than quoting a whole line or sentence and certainly not in the format e.g. 'στυγῶν ... πατέρα', which risks omitting the relevant Greek element altogether.

As with Question 2 above, candidates often fell short of showing how Admetus' anger was emphasised. For example, many translated lines 3–4 (στυγῶν ... πατέρα), but did not draw attention to the strong vocabulary or repetition of idea in the participles στυγῶν and ἐχθαίρων. Candidates had difficulty explaining the contrast in λόγῳ/ἔργῳ (line 4), and translating φίλοι as 'friends/friendly' did not help to make the point clearly.

Exemplar 3

• ὁ στυγῶν ΜΕΝ ἢ μ' ἔτικτεν Admetus says
hating the woman who bore me! He refuses to
call her his mother but instead the woman who gave
birth to me. This shows his ^{anger} hatred and distance between her
and his mother because of this

This is an example of good answer technique. The answer opens with a relevant Greek quotation and an accurate English translation and then goes on to explain the link between the quoted section and how it emphasises Admetus' anger. In fact, the candidate could have made two separate points with this reference (i) στυγῶν – harsh word choice (ii) ἢ μ' ἔτικτεν – a cold alternative for 'mother'.

Question 4 (c)

(c) σὺ δ' ἀντιδοῦσα ... ἔσωσας (lines 5–6): how has Alcestis proved her love for Admetus?

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

Most candidates were able to find two ways in which Alcestis proved her love, although 'soul' was an odd choice of translation for ψυχῆς in this context.

Question 5 (b) (ii)

(ii) what does Admetus say to create this effect?

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

Well answered by most, but 'life' as a translation of ψυχῆς did not suit the context.

Question 6 (a)

6 Read the passage and answer the questions.

Alcestis ἐπὶ τοῖσδε παιῖδας χειρὸς ἐξ ἐμῆς δέχου.
Admetus δέχομαι, φίλον γε δῶρον ἐκ φίλης χειρὸς.
Alcestis σύ νυν γενοῦ τοῖσδ' ἀντ' ἐμοῦ μήτηρ τέκνοις.

Euripides, *Alcestis*, lines 375–377

(a) ἐπὶ τοῖσδε (line 1): what are the conditions on which Alcestis hands the children over to Admetus?

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

This question was answered well.

Question 6 (b)

(b) δέχομαι ... χειρὸς (line 2): what does Admetus say to show his affection towards the children?

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

Admetus shows his affection by describing the children as a 'gift' (δῶρον). Some candidates played safe by adding 'dear' (φίλον) – a good idea – or even by quoting the whole line.

Question 6 (c)

(c) σύ νυν ... τέκνοις (line 3): what role will Admetus have to adopt in the future?

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

Almost all candidates knew about Admetus' future role as mother.

Question 7

7* Read the passage and answer the question.

Admetus	ὦ δαῖμον, οἷας συζύγου μ' ἀποστερεῖς.	
Alcestis	καὶ μὴν σκοτεινὸν ὄμμα μου βαρύνεται.	
Admetus	ἀπωλόμην ἄρ', εἴ με δὴ λείψεις, γύναι.	
Alcestis	ὡς οὐκέτ' οὔσαν οὐδὲν ἂν λέγοις ἐμέ.	
Admetus	ὄρθου πρόσωπον, μὴ λίπης παιῖδας σέθεν.	5
Alcestis	οὐ δῆθ' ἐκοῦσά γ'· ἀλλὰ χαίρετ', ὦ τέκνα.	
Admetus	βλέψον πρὸς αὐτούς, βλέψον.	
Alcestis	οὐδὲν εἰμ' ἔτι.	
Admetus	τί δρᾶς; προλείπεις;	
Alcestis	χαῖρ'.	10
Admetus	ἀπωλόμην τάλας.	

Euripides, *Alcestis*, lines 384–391

How does Euripides make this passage emotional?

In your answer you may wish to consider:

- Admetus' cries and appeals
- Alcestis' acceptance that she is dying

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

[8]

The Greek passage provided plenty of opportunities for comment on the emotional content and candidates found lots to say, although some points were presented as little more than a quotation from the Greek plus accurate translation without much development or explanation. Too many paragraphs ended with a phrase such as '... and this is very emotional', without any attempt to explain or qualify the emotion (e.g. grief, anxiety, despair etc.). Also, there was a reluctance to discuss the language, despite some obvious examples of e.g. repetition (ἀπωλόμην etc.), exclamation (ὦ τέκνα etc.), imperative (μὴ λίπης etc.), and where language points were presented out of context, the sense was often unclear. For example, βλέψον (line 7) was often cited as a language point (repetition, imperative) but the emotional element, implicit in πρὸς αὐτούς, was not discussed. The best answers included language points as part of each content point, thus ensuring, or at least enabling, a consideration of the context.

Exemplar 4

- In the line 'ὦ δαίμον, τίς σὺ γούνη π' ἀπὸς τέρας', meaning 'oh fate, what a wife you deprive me of', the use of *gouneh* and appeal to the divine creates a powerful sense of Admetus' emotional feeling of powerlessness.
- The use of the noun *σὺ γούνη* meaning literally 'partner', has connotations of ~~mutual~~ equality and mutual support, giving the reader a sense of Admetus' and Alcestis' closeness and co-dependence, and thus an impression of the deep emotional loss of her death.

The candidate has made two points (about the emotional content in line 1 of the passage), supported by a quotation of the whole line and an accurate translation. A key word, *σὺ γούνη*, has been singled out for discussion – similarly, for the first point *ὦ δαίμον* might have been quoted rather than the whole line – and each point is well written and clearly presented. Furthermore, the answer maintains a strong, direct connection with the question with phrases such as 'emotional feeling of powerlessness' and 'deep emotional loss'.

Question 8

- 8* 'Admetus and his family are all victims and are deserving of equal sympathy.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?

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

In answering the short-essay question candidates showed a good knowledge and understanding of the text, and the best answers not only included discussion of the parents and children (as well as Admetus and Alcestis), but also tried to evaluate varying degrees of sympathy. References to the text were usually accurate and well chosen, although there were some answers that generalised at length about the issue of sympathy without specifically referring to the text once. Candidates should be aware that appropriate reference to/use of the text is important to secure a high mark; instructions to this effect are included in the question paper immediately following the wording of the essay question.

Exemplar 5

The 'depth' of the characters' sorrow also suggests that they are victims, deserving pity. Admetus vows to mourn for the duration of his life and to give up music, celebrations and gatherings with fellow drinkers, as well as to never again touch the lyre nor sing with the Libyan flute. This The extent of his self-castigation creates a sense of deep remorse and sorrow, ~~and thus causes~~ making one inclined to sympathise with him as a victim.

This is an example of an excellent paragraph taken from an essay that secured a top mark. The opening sentence introduces the point being made. This is followed by relevant, detailed and accurate references from the text. The paragraph concludes with a sentence explaining how these references effectively relate to / answer the question.

Exemplar 6

Another reason one may agree with the given statement is because although Alcestis is losing more than all her family members, she has more or less accepted her fate as she was the one who chose it for herself. But Admetus, despite losing less, will be alive to experience the painful loss and thus will be more affected by it. As their losses and attitudes towards them balance each other out, equal sympathy is more than reasonable. On the other hand one may argue that sympathy should not be given to Alcestis as she was the one to experience the pain of leaving her family while he remains with his members. Furthermore, the children may deserve sympathy more.

This is an example of a weak paragraph from an essay. Although the candidate attempts to address the question, the contents of the paragraph amount to little more than initial thoughts on the text and generalisations about the situation Admetus and Alcestis find themselves in. The main thrust of the paragraph seems to be in agreement with the wording of the question ("equal sympathy"), but the argument is weak because no specific instances are used from the text in support and the points made are general, not clearly expressed, and even confused (On the other hand ... ff.).

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