

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

H408

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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 34 series overview

Approximately 350 candidates were entered for this option and all seemed to have engaged positively with at least some of the literary sources. Candidates had in general understood the extracts from drama, Thucydides and the two Plato analogies. The Old Oligarch's work seems to have had a more mixed reception. The main achievements of the Key Thinkers were generally understood. Explaining Cleisthenes' reforms is always a challenge, and it was clear that some candidates were less able to do this. In Section B Question 7 was very slightly more popular than Question 8.

This is not an Ancient History paper, which is why we expect candidates to know only the basic background relevant to the Specification. It was necessary, however, to have a rough idea of progression and to be aware that dates BC 'go backwards'. Most candidates had a perfectly satisfactory awareness of the major historical events of the period covered by the prescribed literary sources, but did not always relate these accurately to those sources or the reforms of the Key Thinkers. Some of the lower ability candidates were confused over the century and decade in which the authors of the prescribed sources were writing. That led to some misconceptions – for example, that the Old Oligarch was alive at the time of Solon's reforms. Perhaps encouraging candidates to create visual timelines for display or their own personal use would help to avoid such confusion.

Candidates should also be clearer in their own minds over the use of terms such as 'citizen' and 'magistrate' or 'magistracy' in the context of ancient Athens. In the response to Question 6, many knew perfectly well that 'citizenship' was restricted to adult males registered in a *deme* but still based their response on the fact that women, slaves and metics/resident non-Athenians were not included in any of the reforms. Many understood the term 'magistrate' as being specifically someone who presided over a court case, as it does now. This confusion was evident in the weaker responses to Question 8 and to misunderstanding over the views of Aristophanes, Thucydides, Plato and the Old Oligarch in Question 7.

Candidates should understand that Section A tests knowledge and understanding of a range of individual elements of the Specification, including basic background knowledge (e.g. the meaning of the word 'oligarch'). They do not need to show evidence of wider reading for any of the responses in Section A. The questions carrying only 1 or 2 marks can often be answered in one or two words, as was the case with Questions 1, 4(a) and 4(b). Some candidates wasted time writing two or three sentences for these questions. Candidates should also bear in mind that the 10-mark and 20-mark questions are likely to be complementary, as Questions 5 and 6 were on this paper.

In responses to Section B it was obvious that the majority of candidates had taken seriously the requirement for further individual research. A wide range of ancient sources and modern scholars were used effectively in responses to Questions 7 and 8. Many had followed up the suggestions in the companion resource material published by Bloomsbury. Some candidates had clearly read the relevant sections of the Aristotelian *Constitution of the Athenians* and Plutarch's *Lives* of Solon and Pericles as well as the parts of the Aristophanes plays not prescribed for study. Others had also read Aeschylus' *Persians* or Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. Candidates used a very wide range of modern scholars. Responses overall to Questions 7 and 8 featured most of the standard modern scholars (e.g. Barrow, Cartledge, Ehrenberg, Macdowell) as well as presenters of television programmes, lecturers at school conferences and material available in on-line courses. Some had made good use of the very accessible introductions to the Penguin editions of the *Oresteia* and the Aristophanes plays. One or two used archaeological evidence, notably from the Agora excavations. Others made good use of knowledge gained from other Components. Less impressive were the candidates who just wrote 'a scholar says...' followed by a couple of words which could have been picked out of the air.

Use of time was sometimes an issue. Where candidates worked through the paper in sequence they tended to have allocated time sensibly and generally appeared to complete the paper without needing to

rush or reduce their final response to bullet points. Some candidates elected to tackle the questions out of order. Some decided to do the Section B essay first and then the other extended-response questions. These candidates often misjudged the time they would then need for Section A and had to rush Questions 5 and 6.

Question 1

Source A: The Old Oligarch, *Constitution of the Athenians* 2 – 3

- 1 What was the name of the Solonic property class to which the 'hoplites' in line 4 belonged? [1]

Candidates would benefit from knowing the military obligations of each property class as well as the privileges. This question was correctly answered by fewer than 40% of candidates.

Question 2

- 2 Explain why the term 'vote' in 'vote by lot' (line 6) is incorrect when used in **Source A**. [1]

Approximately 80% of candidates were able to explain clearly the essential difference between consciously voting for someone and the random nature of sortition/use of some kind of lottery. As the mark scheme indicates, candidates had to convince the examiner that they understood the random nature of sortition as contrasted with the conscious choice made in a vote. Some candidates misunderstood the question and thought it related to whether or not sortition existed at the time of Solon.

Question 3

- 3 The anonymous author of **Source A** is usually called 'The Old Oligarch'. How well does the passage suggest that this nickname is justified? [10]

Almost all candidates recognised that there was a balance of views in the source. The vast majority had a good understanding of what an oligarch might think/want. The best candidates picked out nuance in his language, pointing that even when saying seemingly pro-democratic things, the Old Oligarch was still using language that labelled the *demos* negatively and the *élite* positively.

Credit was given to any opinion which was supported by specific evidence from the passage and which showed that the candidate had understood the ancient context of the term 'oligarch'. Examiners appreciated the comments by some candidates about oligarchy favouring 'the few rather than the many'. Candidates who were able to include evidence from all parts of the passage were able to come to the most convincing conclusions. Examination of the adjective 'old' was also credited where appropriately supported, but was not required. Discussion of the authorship of the work (e.g. Xenophon or not?) was not required. Some candidates wasted time on this. Candidates commenting on the reference to 'decisions' in line 10 of Source A rarely noticed that the comment related simply to voting for a commander (line 10), rather than commanding an army in person.

Question 4 (a)

The reformer Cleisthenes changed the way in which Athenians identified themselves, changing the old pattern based on areas where specific noble families were important.

- 4 (a) Name **two** of the three broad geographical regions into which Cleisthenes divided the population of Attica. [2]

This was answered correctly by about 60% of candidates. There was confusion in some candidates' minds between the physical city of Athens and the wider political entity (=polis) which encompassed both Athens itself and the territory of Attica. 'Polis' was therefore not an acceptable alternative to 'City/asty'. 'Shore', given as an alternative to 'Coast[al]' was acceptable. There was considerable confusion with the three factions which pre-dated the reforms of Cleisthenes. Other candidates were clearly guessing.

Question 4 (b)

- (b) Cleisthenes then divided these groups into smaller divisions, so that there were 30 small divisions in all. What Greek name is given to these 30 divisions? [1]

This question was answered correctly by about 60% of the candidates. The clue given in the question (the number '30') was missed by those who gave the answer 'demes' or 'tribes'. Some of those candidates went on in Questions 5 and/or 6 to give the correct details about numbers of demes, *trittyes* and tribes and their relationship to each other.

Question 5

- 5 Explain why the people of Athens might have welcomed the changes made by Cleisthenes in the way people identified themselves. [10]

This question produced the widest variation in performance.

Many candidates handicapped themselves by addressing the question only as far as the word 'changes'. They consequently included material which really belonged to Question 6. Others ignored the word 'welcomed'. The candidate who wrote the following response, however, did exactly what was asked.

Exemplar 1

The people of Athens, in particular the thetes and potentially the Zeugital class would welcome Cleisthenes artificial tribal system as a way of identification to break the aristocratic hold of the nobility and wealthy (pentacosmedimnoi class). This is because the people of Athens now registered at their local deme, and took on the deme name. This prevented citizens from obtaining power from birth aiding equality within Athens ~~it~~ by giving people names derived by demes therefore helping the institutions become more democratic thus ~~helping~~ the people.

of Athens might have ~~welcomed~~ welcomed the changes made by Cleisthenes.

Another reason why the people of Athens might have welcomed the changes made by Cleisthenes is that due to identifying oneself by deme reducing the power of noble family names it may have led to a reduction of noble in-fighting as power shifted from individual family units to a tribal level. As a result, this may have led to an increase in stability politically which would have been welcomed by the people of Athens.

Moreover, by approaching the deme for citizenship it was more likely that a member of the polis was granted citizenship due to the increased accountability under Cleisthenes' reforms rather than the phratry system under Solon. Therefore, the people of Athens had more security in being able to achieve citizenship as it was controlled by the Deme and Demarkhos rather

than a phratry led by nobility
therefore, increasing the ~~access~~
accessibility of citizenship, improving
the way in which people
identified themselves. ~~the~~ As a
result, the changes made by
Cleisthenes might have been
welcomed by the people of
Athens.

This is a clear response which focuses very closely on the question. The candidate understands the consequences for the ordinary people of both the *deme* name and the new affiliations to an artificially-created tribe. The candidate has realised that this question does not require a discussion of all the changes made by Cleisthenes. 9/10

Some candidates also made the sensible point that the old aristocratic leaders might not have welcomed the changes as they symbolised a possible loss of influence or prestige.

Question 6

- 6* 'Cleisthenes was the first person to involve all the citizens of Attica in everyday decisions.' Explain how far you agree with this statement. You may use your understanding of Cleisthenes' reforms as a starting point in your answer. **[20]**

Candidates who organised their response thematically and looked at both 'first' and 'all' were most clearly able to show and develop their point of view. The focus of the question was intended to be 'everyday' decision-making. Candidates who showed understanding of the opportunities available at both *Deme* and Council/*Boule* level therefore did well on this aspect of the question. For 'all', the mark scheme indicates the range of material which could be used. 'First' was an invitation to consider the role of the other Key Thinkers. Most discussed Solon; some also discussed Ephialtes and Pericles. Many candidates stated that ostracism was not an everyday decision and probably post-dated Cleisthenes, but discussed it anyway, thus wasting time. The introduction of the office of General/*strategos* in 501 could be made relevant, but most candidates just included it as a reform of Cleisthenes and then said it was not an everyday decision.

Below is an extract from a response illustrating a good conclusion. Before this section, the candidate had examined the extent to which all citizens could be involved in everyday decisions as a result of Solon's class reforms. The response as a whole gained 17/20.

Exemplar 2

However, many of Solon's reforms still held limitations for lower class citizens; this was improved by Cleisthenes, who introduced several reforms to ensure that all citizens of Attica had equal involvement in everyday decisions. This was predominantly done through the introduction of the council of the 500, or the Boule. Though Solon ~~is~~ is speculated to have held a council of 400, it is unclear as to its function and cannot be credited as a progression to include all ~~the~~ citizens of Attica in everyday decisions. Cleisthenes' Boule on the

other hand is a prime example of including all citizens when making decisions. Due to Cleisthenes' other reform of developing the tribe system and replacing the 4 ancient tribes with the new 10, it was easy to allow a fair selection of citizens to enter the council of 500 as 50 were picked from each tribe through sortition. The randomness of sortition enabled a fair selection of people from all classes to decide and carry out the subject of the assembly and pass various laws and acts within the city. This enabled all citizens of Attica.

This candidate has managed to discuss both *deme* and *Boule* while considering the possible ways in which Solon, rather than Cleisthenes, could have been 'the first.' The contributions of both Solon and Cleisthenes are concisely and clearly discussed.

Candidates who did Question 6 before Question 5 generally produced weaker answers to both questions.

Section B overview

Question 7

Use classical sources, and secondary sources, scholars and/or academic works to support your argument. You should also consider possible interpretations of sources by different audiences.

- 7* 'Aristophanes is the most effective critic of Athenian Democracy.' Using evidence from the plays of Aristophanes and the writings of **at least one other** author, discuss how far you agree with this statement. Justify your response. **[30]**

This question was an invitation to compare and contrast different ways of criticising Athenian democracy. Candidates were able to define 'effective' as they chose: their arguments were judged on the basis of the terms they had laid down. The majority used Plato and the Old Oligarch as the other examples. Many candidates took the opportunity to discuss the immediacy of theatre in general as a reason for its effectiveness at the time. They contrasted this with the less immediate effectiveness of literary works. Thucydides, Plato or the Old Oligarch had written. There were some good comments about how the authors' bias might make their viewpoints less effective.

Candidates who demonstrated thoughtful ideas about what might make a criticism effective produced very good responses. There was, however, comparatively little citation of modern scholarship.

The extract below illustrates a good way of integrating argument, prescribed sources and scholarship. Note that the candidate has not needed to signpost by using the words 'the modern scholar [name] says...'

Exemplar 3

Euripides is also an effective critic of Athenian democracy as his play 'Suppliants' written in 420BC shows two views on Athenian democratic system. The Theban Herald shares a similar view to Aristophanes as he believes the demagogues mislead the demos but he also shares the same view as Richard Dawkins in that he too believes that rule by all is not a good thing, The Theban Herald even refers to them as the 'common mob'. This shows the opinion that a small group of the elite should be in control. However, Theseus in 'Suppliants' has the opposite opinion as

he believes in democracy and insists on asking for his people's opinion before agreeing to help the mothers from Argos return the bodies of their sons. This draws similarities to Geoffrey de Ste Croix's opinion that democracy was a victory of the demos over aristocrats as they gain power. This is evident under Theseus' rule as he asks for their approval before agreeing to help the women.

This shows Euripides as an effective critic as he ~~is~~ represents the contemporary debate as to whether an oligarchy or democracy is

the best form of government through the play 'Suppliants' as he has the two conflicting opinions personified into a debate (Agon).

However, these two conflicting views give rise to question what Euripides true opinion of democracy is and therefore making the performance of both sides rather half-hearted. Whereas, Aristophanes is set in stone in his opinion against democracy and demagogues. This is further

The response as a whole gained 9/10 for AO1 and 15/20 for AO2. It was fairly typical of the better responses. Several plays of Aristophanes are cited, together with good detail from Euripides' *Suppliants*. The overall argument would have benefited from a wider and clearer definition of 'effective' and a better balance between Aristophanes and other authors, but gained a mark from Level 5 for AO1 because of the level and range of relevant detail from the sources selected.

Question 8

- 8* 'The Athenians were proud of their government institutions and legal system.' Using evidence from **at least two** of the authors you have studied, evaluate how far you think that this is an accurate judgement. [30]

[Section B Total: 30]

Although this question was marginally less popular than Question 7 it produced a larger number of very good responses. Evidence of wider reading of ancient sources was evident, notably the use of material from the Aristotelian *Constitution of the Athenians* and Herodotus *Histories* III.80-82. The Herodotus material worked well as a complement to the prescribed section of Euripides' *Suppliants*. Some candidates appeared to have chosen this question because it was the lesser of two evils; most of these simply produced a limited historical survey or a response based almost entirely on Aristophanes. The best responses came from those candidates who had clearly distinguished between 'government institutions' and 'legal system' and understood the term 'magistrate' in an ancient context. They produced thoughtful responses, some concluding that the Athenians were prouder of one than the other. Virtually all the prescribed sources could be used either to support or refute the statement. Most chose to use Aristophanes, Thucydides, Plato or the Old Oligarch for 'government institutions' and Aristophanes or Aeschylus for 'legal system.' Nearly all were able to say something useful about the perceived bias or purpose of the sources used. Candidates who knew the context and performance date of the Aeschylus extract were better-placed to link it to the Areopagus in particular rather than the legal system in general. Modern scholarship was less well-used, often consisting of phrases with no particular purpose other than to show the examiner that the candidate knew the name of a modern scholar.

A number of candidates opened with a reference to a modern scholar, but few did it with the skill shown in the following example. The candidate makes clear from the outset that s/he can integrate factual content, use of modern scholarship and argument and indeed continued to do so.

Exemplar 4

R. Barrow writes that Athenian pride in democracy (and by extension, government institutions and legal system) was strongest when Athenians were able to connect it to their identity and their successes against non-democratic enemies. Pericles evidently realised this when he delivered his funeral oration in 430 BC to "calm the anger of the people"; he draws contrasts between oligarchic Sparta and democratic Athens "with 'no need for preparation or deceit.'" The strongest criticisms of democracy were written at times of hardship: the Old Oligarch's views are coloured by the events of the Peloponnesian war, and Plato writes in 380 BC, following the humiliating defeat of Athens by Sparta in 404 BC.

Interestingly, the recorder of Pericles' funeral oration was the staunchly anti-democratic Thucydides. ~~As~~ Thucydides occasionally recorded speeches as "what should have been" rather than what was actually said, some scholars believe that the speech suggests he was pro-democracy. Ehrstberg contests this; Thucydides writes that Pericles "governed well" but remarks that Athens "though a democracy in name was governed by its first citizen". This suggests that Thucydides thought Pericles a capable leader but that the system itself was unjust. Nevertheless, Pericles is recorded as fully idealising

The response gained 10/10 for AO1 and 19/20 for AO2. In other parts of the response the candidate showed that Aristophanes' criticisms were of the exploitation of Athenian government institutions and legal system by demagogues, not of democracy. The Old Oligarch was cited as approving – possibly grudgingly – of the freedom of speech in the *Ekklesia* and theatre and the response ended with an analysis of the extract from *Suppliants*, finally returning to the original premise of the first paragraph.

A different way of tackling the question, looking at the possible aim of the writers of the sources, is illustrated in the extract below, from a response which gained 9/10 for AO1 and 15/20 for AO2.

Exemplar 5

On one hand, Pericles' funeral oration by Thucydides exemplifies that the Athenians were proud of their government institutions and legal systems. Pericles states that their way of life is unique and not copied from any other polis and makes frequent connections to the "better" qualities of Athens, such as their education and lovely houses, to their enemies, Sparta during the Peloponnesian War. This piece is a cleverly formed rhetoric with the purpose to inspire many to fight. The

people of Athens had lost a lot with farmers losing land as they ~~are~~ leave for protection ~~at~~ from the city and the rich also left all their belongings and fine ~~houses~~ houses and estates. Therefore, this is a piece of idealised democratic propaganda to rally the support of the demos for the Peloponnesian War suggesting that the Athenians' pride comes from its government institutions and legal system.

The work of Aeschylus, the *Eumenides* is a part of a trilogy called 'the Orestia' and promoted the legal system through the decree of Athena at Orestes' trial. The Joint Association of Classics Teachers suggests that Aeschylus agrees with the reforms of Ephialtes' reforms of the Areopagus for he uses Athena to sanctify it within the play. However, John Thorley suggests that Aeschylus is trying to uphold the "dignity of a severely battered institution" as Aeschylus comes from a noble

background.

The candidate shows a good understanding of the likely aim and original reception of the *Funeral Oration* and also integrates knowledge of context, which could have been gained either from the opening of *Acharnians* or from general reading. The reference to the Joint Association of Classical Teachers as a modern scholar was slightly puzzling, but seems to indicate that the candidate has read an appropriate article from one of its publications – probably 'Omnibus', a magazine aimed primarily at A Level students. There is also a solid citation of a named scholar. Subsequent paragraphs looked at Aeschylus, Euripides and Plato, with the candidate commenting on the analogy of the ship in relation to Plato's probable response to the death of Socrates.

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