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Examiners' report

CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

H408

For first teaching in 2017

H408/34 Summer 2024 series

Contents

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. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. 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 and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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Paper 34 series overview

The number of candidates entered for this component appears to be consistent from year to year. This component requires a mixture of historical research and literary appreciation skills. Candidates are clearly being encouraged to make connections between ancient Athenian and modern concepts of democracy, and also to consider the effects of different genres of writing. Some made good use of information gained when studying for other components – notably Greek Theatre.

Handwriting continues to be a problem, not only where the candidates have written their own answers but also in the few cases where a scribe was used. It would be helpful to the candidates if both they and any scribes were reminded of the need to write clearly – if need be, in capital letters or on alternate lines.

The Key Thinkers and Section B parts of the component encourage wider reading and research among students. Most gave evidence of access to some or all the standard works by Barrow, Cartledge, Ehrenberg and the material published by Bloomsbury. Some good material is also available via BBC Radio 4 Listen Again, e.g. past editions of 'In Our Time' (Solon) and 'You're Dead to Me' (Cleisthenes). Others made good use of schools' lectures by well-known classical scholars.

Care is needed when doing on-line research / revision
Teachers should warn their candidates that care should be taken when using Wikipedia for research / revision because of the open invitation to all-comers to contribute and/or edit material. All unattributed Wikipedia statements should be checked for accuracy in the established textbooks, scholarly works and/or primary sources which teachers will probably have made available to candidates.

Numbering of responses
A few candidates mis-numbered their responses. Wherever possible, we used internal evidence to decide which question was being answered, but where we could not make a clear decision, we went with the candidate's numbering. Candidates should therefore check that they have numbered all responses accurately. Errors tend to creep in when questions are answered out of sequence.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• Displayed a good working knowledge of all or most of the prescribed literary sources. • Focused clearly on the question as phrased. • Were precise in their use of evidence. • Knew the reforms of Cleisthenes and could explain them clearly. • Planned their responses to the 20- and 30-mark questions.	• Confused Solon and Cleisthenes. • Lost (or never showed) focus on the question. • Produced an all-purpose 'prepared' essay which didn't answer the question. • Were vague about dates of events. • Rarely showed precise knowledge of the prescribed literary sources.

Section A overview

Candidates employed a range of strategies to plan their time. Many simply answered Questions 1, 2, 4 and 5 before embarking on other questions. Others tackled the higher tariff questions first. Provided the responses are clearly labelled and candidates remember to check that they have attempted all questions, both strategies can be effective. Once again, however, we would like to emphasise that the 10- and 20- mark questions on the Key Thinkers should be considered as a pair. Candidates who did Question 7 before Question 6 sometimes found themselves with nothing to say in response to Question 6. Some candidates slowed themselves down by writing long, beautifully-crafted sentences for Questions 1, 2, 4 and 5. These questions can be answered in one or few words.

Source A
Thucydides: *History of the Peloponnesian War* 2.65.5–9

During peacetime, <u>he had ruled</u> moderately and steadfastly. Athens had been safe under his leadership, and had indeed reached the very height of her greatness. When the war began, he also demonstrated that he had made an accurate estimate of Athens' power under these circumstances. He outlived the outbreak of war by two years and six months, and <u>after his death</u>, his foresight was appreciated even more than when he was alive. He had told the Athenians to be patient and take care of their navy, not to attempt to enlarge their empire during the war, and not to put the city in danger; if they did all of this, they would be victorious. In fact, they did everything he told them not to do, adopting policies with disastrous effects for themselves and their allies in matters seemingly unrelated to the war, motivated by personal ambition and self-interest. Had this been successful, it would have brought honour and profit only to individuals, and if unsuccessful, it would have sabotaged the city's war effort.	5 10
The reason for this was not difficult to find. Pericles derived his authority from his high reputation and intelligence, while he was also clearly incorruptible. Therefore he was able to control the people freely: to lead, rather than be led by them. Since he did not seek power by dishonest means, he did not need to flatter them; because of the strength of his own worthy character, he could go so far as to oppose and even to anger the people. When he saw them unsuitably over-confident and arrogant, his words would strike fear into them; when they were needlessly fearful, he would build up their confidence again. Thus Athens, although a democracy in name, was in fact ruled by its first citizen.	15 20

Question 1 (a)

1
(a)　'He had ruled' (line 1). 'He' refers to Pericles. What official post did Pericles hold in Athens for most of the 10 years before his death? **[1]**

Most candidates were able to give a correct answer. The most common incorrect answer was 'Archon.'

Question 1 (b)

(b) State **one** way in which this post was different from the other posts which Athenian citizens could hold. **[1]**

Many knew that the post of tribal general/*strategos* was filled by election but did not understand that, by definition, elections require a conscious choice by voters. Some said 'They were elected by sortition' which we couldn't accept as this answer is contradictory.

Question 2

2 'After his death' (line 5). What caused Pericles' death? **[1]**

This was less well-known, and the most regular incorrect suggestion was that he died in battle. We accepted a range of contagious or infectious diseases accepted as convincing diagnoses of the 'plague' described by Thucydides. 'Bird flu' is not one of them.

Question 3

3 Explain what impression Thucydides creates of Pericles' character and his influence in Athens in the late 5th century BC in **Source A**. **[10]**

This question simply required the selection and discussion of a suitable quantity of material from the passage printed on the paper. Most candidates managed to gain at least Level 3 (5/10 or 6/10). The most common errors were the result of insufficiently careful reading. 'Outlived the outbreak of war' was often misread as 'Outlived the Peloponnesian War.' Many candidates also stated that Pericles' advice was ignored during his lifetime, rather than after his death. As candidates are expected to have studied the prescribed literary sources, such misunderstandings are puzzling. Candidates often overlooked the contrast between Pericles and his successors.

Source B

After the tyrant Hippias was expelled in 510 BC, there was civil conflict between two main factions in Athens until Cleisthenes gained power in 508 BC. During 508 BC and 507 BC, Cleisthenes made several important reforms to the Athenian constitution.

Question 4

4 To which influential Athenian family did Cleisthenes belong? **[1]**

Only about 70% of candidates produced the correct answer.

Question 5

5   State the name of the Athenian who led the main faction opposed to Cleisthenes after Hippias
     was expelled.   **[1]**

> We saw a wide range of interesting alternatives to 'Isagoras', often with complete disregard of
> chronology and/or geography. Perhaps recalling a similar question from 2022, some candidates named
> the Spartan king Cleomenes.

Question 6

6   Explain how Cleisthenes' reforms might have helped to reassure Athenian citizens that civil
     conflicts were less likely to occur in the future.   **[10]**

> Many candidates gained a mark in Level 3 or Level 4. Some, however, were unable to explain the tribal
> reforms accurately or even understand what they were. Those who explained them most clearly started
> with the redefinition of the regions (City, Coast, Inland) and the evolution of the ten new Tribes. Those
> who started with *demes* gave very muddled accounts. A good example of clear understanding is shown
> in this extract:

Exemplar 1

Next is the introduction of the tribe system,
Cleisthes ~~broke~~ removed alot of the power from
the four old tribes keeping them as religious
entities. From each regions (coastal, inland, city)
demes would be labeled one to ten and ten
would be assigned a tribe. This meant
that tribes would be spread out throughout
Attica. This broke the regional conflict,
as this was a big reason the tyranny of
Peisistatus started as the mountains region of
Attica was unhappy with how they were treated.
So breaking regional affiliation would
mean civil tension is less likely to occur.

This candidate had discussed *demes* in the previous paragraph as a separate item. The way in which the tribal reforms are explained suggests that a good strategy, particularly for visual learners, is to recall and describe the map featured both in the Bloomsbury OCR-endorsed book and Ehrenberg's '*From Solon to Socrates*.' Note that the candidate also relates this description clearly to the issue of civil conflict, as required in the question. This response also illustrates a good way of arranging the links between AO1 and AO2 in this type of question.

Some candidates didn't understand the terms, often confusing Tribes and *demes*. Others were just generally confused, attributing to Cleisthenes some or all of the Solonic reforms.

Some candidates still don't understand that the formation of the new Tribes and the reclassification of citizenship didn't involve redistribution of land or physical migration of populations. A parallel would be the experience many of them have when transferring to secondary school or sixth-form college. They are put in groups (e.g. houses, forms) with others from all over the intake area and have to think of themselves as members of that new group as well as members of their new school or college.

We accepted relevant discussion of ostracism, even though its first use was in 487, as some ancient sources attribute it to Cleisthenes.

A few candidates seemed to think that Cleisthenes' reforms followed closely on Solon's, despite the 86 years between the two.

Question 7*

7* 'Thanks to Cleisthenes, the *Boule* (Council of 500) became the most important element of the Athenian democracy.'

Assess how far you agree with this statement. **[20]**

There were three areas of focus in this question. Only a very few candidates managed to address all three. Most frequently ignored was the word 'became.' Candidates instead read it as 'was,' and therefore missed the opportunity to comment on 5th century developments. 'Thanks to Cleisthenes' was usually picked up, with the better responses commenting on the contributions of reformers before and after Cleisthenes. A small but significant minority took this as a chance to show what they knew about Solon and said little, if anything, about either the *Boule* or Cleisthenes. Others clearly didn't know the difference between Solon and Cleisthenes, or just muddled up the reforms of both.

The words 'most important' invited evaluation and comparison with other elements of the democracy. It was up to the candidates to decide what they felt were the 'elements' of democracy. Along with the other organs – the Assembly, *Areopagus* and law courts – there was room to consider the use of sortition or such underlying principles as *isonomia* and *isegoria.* Stronger responses covered a good range of organs and/or elements. The post of *strategos* was not a Cleisthenic reform, as we know this was introduced in 501 BC, but we given relevant discussion of its significance in the 5th century.

Careful planning was key to this question. Some responses were so long and duplicated so much of the material from Question 6, that some candidates ran out of time and produced very sketchy responses to other extended-response questions. This was most common among candidates who had tackled Question 7 first.

Section B overview

The overall aim of Section B is to give candidates the opportunity to show their wider knowledge of the prescribed literary sources. Alternatively, they could choose to show their understanding of Athenian democracy. We have normally asked for a minimum of 3 literary sources to be used as evidence. This time, because fewer of the prescribed literary sources cover the material related to the law courts, evidence from a minimum of 2 was required. Good knowledge of *Wasps,* the jury system and the available material on the various types of court case was helpful for Question 9. Candidates' uncertainty over such knowledge was probably the reason why Question 8 proved more popular.

The use of scholars still varied widely. Some candidates were content with memorable soundbites of doubtful relevance. Mackie's 'Cleon, the Donald Trump of Athenian politics' – was often just dropped in for no good reason that we could see. Some made very good use of the regularly-cited – Barrow, Carey, Cartledge, Ehrenberg, Hall, A.H.M. Jones, McDowell, Scott, Sommerstein and Thorley. Other scholars (e.g. de St Croix, Gomme, Wyles) were cited less often, but usually effectively. Some candidates had made good use of the notes and prefaces to the widely-available Penguin editions of Aeschylus, Aristophanes and Euripides. Others had used what appeared to be 'all-purpose' examples from the internet, not always with sufficient thought as to their meaning or relevance.

> **OCR support**
>
> (i) OCR has produced a blog detailing where you can find suitable material that meets the requirement for 'secondary scholars and academics', what we expect candidates to do with it in the exam and how examiners go about marking the scholarship requirement.
>
> [Read the blog here](#).

Question 8, the more popular of the two options, posed the challenge to candidates of managing their time effectively through careful selection of the literary sources available to them. Question 9 posed the challenge of demonstrating precise knowledge and understanding of the legal system and law courts.

As usual, Euripides and *Eumenides* were regularly confused, with several candidates referring to 'Eumenides' play *Suppliants.'* Some candidates made good use of plays they had read in different contexts, either the Greek Theatre component (e.g. Dionysus' questions at the end of *Frogs*) or just through modern performances of Greek plays.

Modern literacy can result in a limited understanding of ancient Athenian experiences.

As a teaching point, it might be worth exploring with candidates how they respond to things they hear as opposed to what they read in books. Here are some ideas.

- Why do politicians use soundbites and repetition?
- Why do students take notes in a lesson or lecture?
- Why does Aristophanes repeat the same jibes about Cleon?

Teachers could make the link with World of the Hero – the *Aeneid* was written to be read, while the Homeric epics were performed/recited to instrumental accompaniment.

- What differences might this have made?
- How does seeing a play performed (or maybe directing a play) differ from reading the script?
- Why do people learn song lyrics more quickly than poems?

Question 8*

8* 'Drama was the most effective way to get the citizens of Athens to think critically about the Athenian system of government.'

Assess how far you agree with this statement. Justify your answer with reference to the works of **at least two** of the authors you have studied. **[30]**

Marks for this question varied considerably, with some candidates not entirely understanding that both Tragedy and Comedy count as 'drama.' They also took 'at least' to mean 'a maximum of' and therefore didn't consider – even briefly – the possibility that they might need to think about including genres other than drama. A few explored the effects of Athenian citizens having conversations in the *Agora* or at *symposia*, or from their own experiences in *deme* councils or in the *Boule*, Assembly or law courts. All these points were given credit. Another perceptive point – one of the rare examples we saw – is illustrated in this extract:

Exemplar 2

However, even though the Old Oligarch may provide the best critical analysis of democracy, when considering whether his approach is most effective in encouraging the Athenian citizens to think critically it portays is per far inferior to the dramas. This is largely because the education in ancient Athens cost money which the general population simply did not have, thus works such as "The Constitution of the Athenians" would likely not have been able to be read or appreciated by most Athenian citizens.

The candidate has been discussing the effectiveness of the spoken word (e.g. drama, attending Pericles' *Funeral Oration*) compared with those texts available only to very literate people with the time to read them (e.g. Plato, Old Oligarch). We now absorb all the prescribed literary sources by reading them, but the experiences of the Athenians would have been very different. 'Effectiveness' can therefore depend on the situation or context in which views are presented. Only a few candidates appreciated this.

Question 9*

9* 'The strengths of the Athenian legal system made up for its weaknesses.'

Assess how far you agree with this statement in relation to the legal system and law courts in 5th century Athens. Justify your answer with reference to the works of **at least two** of the authors you have studied. **[30]**

Performance varied considerably. Many candidates were either confused about what constituted the 'legal system' or focused almost exclusively on Draco (7th century) and/or Solon (6th century) with no reference at all to 5th century Athens. Stronger responses showed knowledge of at least two of *Wasps*, *Eumenides* or the Old Oligarch. A few also included some evidence from the trial of Socrates, having clearly encountered this elsewhere. Although technically this is 4th century, we felt it was relevant and were able to credit such material as evidence of wider reading. Relevant references to real court cases focused mainly on Cleon's prosecution of Aristophanes after the performance of *Babylonians*. Some also explained the Trial of the Dog (Labes) in *Wasps* in relation to the prosecution of Laches by Cleon.

We were happy with either *kyrbeis* or *axones* as the term for the rotating boards in the Agora which displayed the laws, but it was not necessary to use either term. An explanation was fine. The same principle applies to 'Allotment device' (or similar) for *kleroterion*. Candidates are still confused over the extract from *Eumenides*, with many still not aware of the context – reinforcing the Ephialtic/Periclean restriction in the powers of the *Areopagus*.

Candidates seemed to make less use of relevant scholarship in this question, but we saw some good examples, such as this one.

Exemplar 3

> 422 BC. Thorley says that to be funny, Aristophanes' comedy had to be pretty close to the truth, as so I will take Aristophanes' 'wasps' as having at least some factual content. In 'wasps' a man named

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The candidate displays sensible use of Thorley's comment, relating it clearly to their reason for accepting the evidence gained from Aristophanes. It is completely relevant and certainly not just a memorable soundbite.

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