

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

H408

For first teaching in 2017

H408/32 Summer 2024 series

Contents

Introduction	3
Paper 32 series overview	4
Section A overview	5
Question 1	5
Question 2	6
Question 3	6
Question 4	6
Question 5	7
Question 6	7
Question 7*	9
Section B overview	12
Question 8*	13
Question 9*	16

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.

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Paper 32 series overview

This series produced a strong range of responses, with many candidates getting especially stuck in to an analysis of how threatening desire was in Ovid and Seneca and how realistically love was portrayed in three authors of their choice. However, there was some evidence of candidates not leaving enough time for the essay and spending too much time on Question 7, comparing Ovid and Seneca.

For the two 10-mark questions, the most successful responses saw candidates delve more deeply into the 'how' aspect of the Ovid question, effectively making use of linguistic devices such as the rhetorical question, use of imperatives and listing, among others, to provide stylistic support for the range of evidence they selected from the source. As with any passage-based question, a selection of material from the whole source – beginning, middle and end – was most effective in hitting the higher levels of marks. For the Seneca 10-mark question, the most effective responses not only made use of general tenets of Senecan Stoicism, but were also grounded in specific examples from cited works of Seneca.

The most successful 20-mark responses treated Ovid and Seneca equally well and examined both sides of the question, thinking carefully about instances where each author did and did not present desire as threatening and providing carefully selected examples to illustrate these ideas. There was a good range of conclusions drawn for this question from a wide variety of material from both Ovid, using the passage, and more generally from *Ars Amatoria* III, and Seneca, including his tragedies, letters and treatises.

Question 9 on the realism of love was by far the more popular question with strong responses comprising material from three selected authors in detail and with good engagement with scholars such as Karanika, Gloyn, Hall, Freeman and Goldhill. Question 8, while less popular, still yielded a number of highly successful responses, using some very specific knowledge of Sappho's fragments to compare with their other chosen authors, with critical appreciation from Poochigian, Karanika, Kreitner, Gloyn and Lefkowitz.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> knew all four authors well enough to provide highly specific examples from a wide range of their works overtly addressed the 'how' aspect of Question 3 in their responses examined all sides of the argument in Question 7 and provided evidence to help them assess 'how far' Ovid and Seneca presented desire as threatening gave short, direct examples from a wide range of Sappho's poetry to provide evidence of different emotions in Question 8 incorporated and embedded cultural context about the authors alongside specific quotations, paraphrases or examples to judge realism in Question 9 engaged with the scholars by embedding criticism or starting with critical ideas in their arguments for the 30-mark essays. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> offered only quotations and assertions with no accompanying analysis or explanation for the 10-mark questions listed general tenets of Stoic teachings for Question 6 rather than relating it to how to handle desire wisely did not fully appreciate the difference between 'dangers of love' and how desires may or may not have been threatening between Question 3 and Question 7 repeated large swathes of material between questions almost word for word listed instances of emotional poetry/other works rather than examining them in relation to (un)successful relationships in Question 8 became bogged down by cultural context, e.g. the Julian Laws, and hinged their entire argument on this rather than on examples from the texts they have studied for Question 9.

Section A overview

Section A was generally answered very well, with candidates offering responses to the 10-mark questions with a wide range of material, either from the printed passage or from their knowledge of Seneca's teachings. Use of Seneca's *Phaedra* was particularly effective for Questions 6 and 7. Question 7 presented an opportunity for candidates to show off their knowledge of Ovid and Seneca in a way that produced a number of excellent responses. However, Questions 3 and 6 seem to have presented more of a challenge, with some candidates not engaging effectively with the 'how' aspect of Question 3 and not offering specific enough examples for Question 6. Where candidates omitted a question, it tended to be Question 6.

The most successful 10-mark responses for the Ovid were characterised by a strong understanding of both the satire of this passage and the underlying seriousness of Ovid's message and used a wide range of examples from the beginning, middle and end of the passage.

The most successful 10-mark responses for the Seneca indicated a strong grasp of Seneca's specific thoughts on how to handle desire wisely, using specific examples from cited works of Seneca to back up their ideas.

The most successful 20-mark responses considered the question from all angles and reached conclusions which were firmly rooted in the evidence offered. The highest levels were awarded to candidates who took ideas and arguments from Questions 3 and 6 and built on and extended them out to reach solid and firmly substantiated conclusions.

Source A

Ovid *Ars Amatoria* III. 433–454

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Question 1

1 Who is the intended audience of *Ars Amatoria* III according to Ovid?

[1]

This question was answered correctly by the majority of candidates. A few candidates wrote that men were the likely intended audience which was not credited as Ovid specified in the opening of the *Ars Amatoria* III that 'it's time to arm you girls' – his professed audience is women. Candidates who specified married or unmarried, or named a social class, were all credited.

Question 2

- 2 Ovid wrote *Ars Amatoria* III to teach his audience 'the art of love'. Give **two** examples of the advice Ovid gives in this poem. [2]

Many candidates made good use of the passage printed on the paper to provide answers to this question. Where marks were not given, it was usually because the candidate had not given an example of 'advice' or gave too generic an answer, e.g. 'how to behave'.

Question 3

- 3 Explain how Ovid warns his audience of the dangers of love in **Source A**.

Support your answer using evidence from **Source A**.

[10]

Responses to this question did not always address the 'how' in an effective way, with some candidates answering with a list of ideas of why love is dangerous from the passage. The most successful responses thought more carefully about the ideas that Ovid presents in this passage to illustrate the dangers which love can provide, such as comparing himself with the prophetess Cassandra before the fall of Troy to stress how vital his advice is. The most highly successful responses made use of the references to Venus and the Appian nymphs at the end of the poem also to illustrate further the very public nature of the woman's humiliation alongside the reference to the cattle market.

Subtext and context in Ovid

Few candidates used some of references to public places buildings like the temple of Venus Genetrix or the Cattle Market in this question. Much of the danger presented by the love affairs Ovid is suggesting to his readers comes from them being revealed publicly which is useful for answering this question.

Seneca offers many examples of negative relationships where desires have overtaken reason and wisdom in his works. He suggests that a truly wise person desires nothing but is grateful for what they already have, especially in relationships.

Question 4

- 4 To which school of philosophy do Seneca's ideas belong? [1]

This question was generally answered well by candidates. However some candidates offered the Academy as an actual school rather than its more abstract usage here.

Question 5

5 Which Roman emperor did Seneca serve as tutor and advisor?

[1]

Most candidates knew that Seneca was Nero's tutor and advisor, although Augustus and Julius Caesar appeared as common incorrect answers.

Question 6

6 Seneca describes desire as a kind of 'captivity'. Explain Seneca's advice about how to handle desire wisely.

[10]

This seemed to be a more challenging question for many candidates. The most successful responses used a wide range of examples to support their understanding of Seneca's ideas, for example, discussing desire as a vice and using Phaedra's excessive and incestuous desire for her stepson, Hippolytus, or referring to the stoic wise man's pursuit of *apatheia* exemplified by the Stilbo anecdote. Other successful arguments made reference to how Seneca illustrates how *not* to use desire and educating his audience this way, using supporting examples such as the story of Hostius Quadra's sexual exploits and the man who loved his wife so much that he wore her *fascea*.

Less successful responses tended not to give examples from Seneca's works or rely heavily on a single text to provide all of their evidence.

Misconception



Some candidates tried to answer the statement part of this question as though it were 'how does Seneca demonstrate desire as captivity?'. The statement part of this question is intended as a starting prompt.

Exemplar 1

		In <i>en Phaedra</i> , he shows that desire for 'unnatural' relationships such as incest lead to dire consequences.
		This informs but at implies that they should not be acted on or at least should be controlled.
		He outlines desire as a 'madness' such as when a man starts to wear his wife's clothes and thus would advise people to love less extremely.
		Moreover, Seneca shows that an wise define love as an ^a friendship an endeavour to form friendships which removes physical desire from these relationships: thus suggesting that when pursuing virtue, physical desire becomes less necessary

This exemplar extract is tightly packed with knowledge and gives a wide variety of examples from the works of Seneca with succinct explanations all linked back to the question. The candidate has shown both a sound grasp of Seneca's own brand of Stoicism and illustrated this with short but directly relevant examples from Seneca's writing. This example indicates a good level of variety for authors where there are no prescribed works to be read.

Question 7*

- 7* Assess how far you agree that **both** Ovid **and** Seneca portray desire as threatening to those who experience it. Justify your response.

You may use **Source A** as a starting point in your answer. You should make reference to the work of Ovid **and** Seneca's ideas.

[20]

There were lots of high-level responses to this question; there was a lot for candidates to get their teeth into! The most successful responses took a strongly comparative approach, either looking for common themes in both authors which might be considered threatening or not or alternating paragraphs on each author to compare them that way. Candidates used their responses from Questions 3 and 6 well to help them begin their answer but then bringing in further evidence from other works or elsewhere in the *Ars Amatoria* III to support their arguments.

Successful responses considered how each author both did and did not present desire as threatening, with common examples being the Procris and Cephalus story and the catalogue of sexual positions in Ovid, and Seneca's relationship with Paulina and his tragedies *Phaedra*, *Thyestes* and *Medea*.

Less successful responses tended to have fewer specific examples, especially from Seneca, and relied too heavily on the printed passage for their evidence for Ovid, which meant less convincing conclusions.

Longer response structure

Where questions require a conclusion to be drawn (e.g. in 20- or 30-mark questions), it is always worth ensuring that a separate concluding paragraph is included at the end of the response to tie arguments together and signpost the key points from the body of the response.

Exemplar 2

On the contrary, Seneca portrays a lack of desire as arguably equally threatening. For example in his description of a world without desire, he clearly describes the 'earth [lying] flat in its foul state', with no fishes in the sea and no bird in the sky. This clear image of a barren world is portrayed as disastrous and threatening to the human race, especially to the contemporary audience, who had already seen much turmoil in the recent political events. Seneca further suggests that desire is there for a reason and has offered to us to 'repopulate the earth'. Although in much of Seneca's work, he explains how the malpractice

of desire, it is clear in his words that he understands the importance of it in human life, therefore not entirely threatening to those who experience it.

Ovid portrays desire as particularly threatening to those who experience it in source A. This can be seen in the suggestion that through sex, men 'seek a shameful gain' warning women that men don't always have the best intentions. Ovid further warns women in source A by describing a scene of a man stealing from a woman, the man 'burns with a love of your pivery'. This therefore depicts ~~malpractice of~~ desire as leading to loss and embarrassment, a threat to not only the woman's dignity but also her possessions.

In this exemplar extract the candidate has begun by stating their position on the question, that Seneca portrays desire as threatening but with instances where it is necessary, and then launches straight into a highly detailed example taken from the *Phaedra*. The candidate develops their argument well with a second example and reiterates their position at the end of the paragraph, making their point particularly clear. The second paragraph changes focus to Ovid and successfully demonstrates their understanding of the passage on the paper by using multiple examples. The argument that desire is threatening to a woman because of the potential for humiliation and loss of status indicates a strong understanding of the cultural context and is effective in arguing that there is a sensible warning for women in among Ovid's satirical work.

Section B overview

Question 8 was significantly less popular than Question 9 but both questions were answered well by the candidates. There was a broad range of scholars employed in both questions, with a significant proportion of responses using three or more scholars embedded into their arguments, demonstrating good engagement with critical appreciation of the set authors.

Successful responses to Question 8 had a clear definition throughout of what each author considered a successful (or unsuccessful) relationship and analysed whether or not specific emotions such as pain, distress, love, happiness, grief, desire, etc. played a crucial role in whether or not these relationships succeeded. The most successful responses made considerable use of many different poems of Sappho, referring not only to her homoerotic love poems and *epithalamia* but also to her familial love poems, for example about her daughter and mother. Strong responses concluded both that Sappho was and was not the only author to consider emotions necessary for a successful relationship; neither conclusion was more effective than the other.

The most successful responses to Question 9 tended to focus on three authors in detail rather than spreading themselves across four authors in less detail. Cultural context was an important and effective metric in this question and the best candidates were able to balance this with demonstrating specific knowledge of the works of their chosen authors, which is equally, if not more, important in answering these 30-mark questions. There was no preferred conclusion to this question and candidates offered a variety of effective analyses. Common conclusions were that Sappho gave the most realistic portrayal of love because of her relatability where Ovid was too unserious, Seneca too rigid and Plato too abstract.

Assessment for learning



The most effective 20- and 30-mark responses almost all had a visible plan on the paper with a skeleton paragraph structure, headline points and, for the 30-mark question, the scholars they intended to use. This is something worth practising when you are writing essays or being tested.

Question 8*

8* 'Only Sappho thinks that emotions are necessary for a successful relationship.'

Assess how far you agree with this opinion. Justify your answer with reference to Sappho's poetry and reference to the works or ideas of at least **two** from Plato, Seneca and Ovid. [30]

This question produced some very interesting discussion of how differently the set authors conceived of a successful relationship and how this affected the emotions accompanying these relationships. It was enjoyable to read candidates delving deeply into the contradictory ideas presented by Plato in the *Symposium*, with top level analysis of the overly emotional speech of Alcibiades being compared strongly to some of Sappho's desperate and jealous outpourings, versus Plato's 'ideal society' in the *Republic* which suggested a complete deconstruction of the family unit and a procreation programme devoid of feelings at all. Further effective arguments considered Seneca's hypocrisy as he demonstrated a modern take on successful love with his wife Paulina rooted in friendship and shared values which may be considered at odds with the Stoic aim of *apatheia*. Ovid was a slightly less popular choice here apart from in counter argument as an author who did not present the same depth and complexity of emotion, or indeed successful relationships, as the others.

Exemplar 3

Sappho depicts that emotions are necessary for a successful relationship through ~~her recollection~~ ~~of past lovers~~ demonstration of the brutality of marriage in contrast to her relationships with her lovers. In Greek society, marriage would typically be based on an agreement by the male members of families, typically based on financial ~~debt~~ or political dealings, rather than emotions. Sappho represents how these relationships are unsuccessful as they lack emotion and are based on the girls. She reflects on this in her fragments on virginity as she portrays it as a hymenoth that has been trampled on and ~~commemorates~~ the loss of virginity in a childlike manner. While the man is satisfied and has fulfilled his duty, the girls have been violated which although according to societal expectations may be successful as they have fulfilled their roles as man and woman, it may be seen as unsuccessful ^{specifically to a modern audience} since it does not satisfy both lovers. Freeman argues that Sappho uses these fragments on virginity to demonstrate male oppression and control of female sexuality so that they remain commodities. In contrast, Sappho

demonstrates through use of emotions that her relationships with her lovers are successful as both lovers are satisfied. She demonstrates this in fragments such as 'honesty I want to die' where she reminisces on the erotic but fulfilling moments she had with a previous lover and when she wishes for past lovers to reminisce their memories fondly. However, there is a contradiction with Sappho as despite her relationships with lovers being beautiful and successful due to emotions, they eventually are unsuccessful since her lover is taken away by marriage, ~~as seen in~~ However we are aware of Sappho's true meaning behind her poetry, as they are heavily fragmented.

This exemplar extract demonstrates a very effective and incisive response to Question 8. The candidate has opened the paragraph by stating their position clearly and straightforwardly and gone on to offer detailed, relevant contextual information on the workings of marriage arrangements in ancient Greek society. This is then exemplified with a specific paraphrase of two of the set fragments of Sappho which the candidate has then linked back to their contextual point. The candidate has then gone on to connect all their ideas together to answer the question, using the words of the question to signpost that this is one of their conclusions.

The second paragraph begins with Freeman's opinion on the topic of female oppression which the candidate then strongly engages with to further their own argument using more examples of Sappho's poetry. The candidate then skilfully brings their arguments full circle, discussing emotions and considering the tension of what might have been considered a successful relationship at the time from different perspectives.

Question 9*

- 9* Assess how realistically love is portrayed in the works and ideas of any **three** from Sappho, Plato, Ovid and Seneca. Justify your answer with reference to the works and ideas of your chosen writers.

[30]

This question was by far the more popular of the two 30-mark essays, possibly because it allowed slightly more freedom to candidates to craft their essays around those authors whose cultural context they were most familiar with or interested in. While cultural context is important to this question, it was heavily overused by a number of candidates at the expense of demonstrating knowledge, understanding and analysis of the works of the set authors. The most successful responses interwove knowledge of, e.g. the Julian Laws, Neronian court life, Athenian and Lesbian society, with specific, detailed examples from the texts rather than generic assertions or generalised conclusions. As with Question 8, it was enjoyable to read the variety of interpretations of 'realistic love', ranging from treatment of homosexuality to mythological exemplars to the gap between ideal and reality. Highly effective discussion of the philosophers stemmed from the tension between ideal behaviour and realistic possibility and many candidates also demonstrated a strong knowledge of Sappho's fragments used in conjunction with arguments about the 'feelings' and 'sense' of love.

Assessment for learning



Evidence of scholarship was good this year, with many candidates citing or quoting critical interpretations in their 30-mark responses. Embedding these scholarly perspectives into your writing early in your paragraph and explaining why this opinion is significant in your answer is a helpful way to hit the higher marks in the level for engaging with the scholars. Try forming a couple of topic sentences using a scholarly perspective.

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