

**A LEVEL**

**Examiners' report**

# **CLASSICAL CIVILISATION**

**H408**

For first teaching in 2017

**H408/21 Summer 2024 series**

# Contents

Introduction .....	3
Paper 21 series overview .....	4
Section A overview .....	5
Question 1 .....	6
Question 2 .....	6
Question 3 .....	7
Question 4 .....	9
Question 5 .....	9
Question 6 .....	10
Question 7* .....	10
Section B overview .....	12
Question 8* .....	12
Question 9* .....	14
Copyright information .....	15

## 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.

### Would you prefer a Word version?

Did you know that you can save this PDF as a Word file using Acrobat Professional?

Simply click on **File > Export to** and select **Microsoft Word**

(If you have opened this PDF in your browser you will need to save it first. Simply right click anywhere on the page and select **Save as . . .** to save the PDF. Then open the PDF in Acrobat Professional.)

If you do not have access to Acrobat Professional there are a number of **free** applications available that will also convert PDF to Word (search for PDF to Word converter).

## Paper 21 series overview

As the topic continues to grow in popularity, it was clear that the candidates enjoyed studying the plays, which was evident in their answers. It was pleasing to see references to performances of the plays which the candidates had seen, either live or as recordings. Candidates generally showed good knowledge of the content of the plays. They were able to express their personal reaction to the plays and the issues they raised, and use evidence to back up their opinions.

Legibility and quality of written communication continues to be an issue. Candidates should be advised to read through what they have written to make sure that their work communicates their ideas clearly and effectively. A lack of paragraphing in many responses makes it harder for examiners to follow the train of thought of the candidates.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read the questions carefully</li> <li>• addressed the question directly</li> <li>• came to a conclusion</li> <li>• in the 10-mark questions, made close reference to the sources</li> <li>• separated points clearly by using paragraphs, especially in extended writing questions</li> <li>• used both literary and material culture evidence in the extended writing questions</li> <li>• provided quotations/close reference to the plays</li> <li>• were aware of the historical and social context of the plays</li> <li>• discussed the plays as pieces of drama, rather than literature</li> <li>• made mention of several scholars, showing good engagement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• made little reference to the actual plays in the extended writing questions</li> <li>• used information which was not relevant to the question</li> <li>• wrote lengthy introductions to some responses, including lower tariff questions</li> <li>• started a response to higher tariff questions with a conclusion and then disagreed with their introduction, leading to a confusing argument</li> <li>• used technical terms such as <i>peripeteia</i> and <i>anagnorisis</i> without understanding what they mean</li> <li>• made little/no reference to scholars in the essay.</li> </ul>

### Assessment for learning



Candidates should be reminded to:

- follow the instructions carefully
- number questions clearly and carefully, especially when identifying which essay is being answered
- write clearly and legibly
- use paragraphs to make separate points
- start the response to each 10-, 20- and 30-mark question on a new page of the answer booklet; very few candidates did this, sometimes not even leaving a gap between answers, making it difficult to work out where one answer ended and the next one began.

## Section A overview

In general, candidates dealt adequately with content of the pot, but there was evidence that not all were familiar with the background details of the pot and what it shows. Candidates generally had good knowledge of the plot and details of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*.

### Source A

#### Kylix by Douris

#### Image 1 Exterior of the kylix

Item removed due to third party copyright restrictions

**Image 2 Interior of the kylix****Question 1**

- 1 Give the names of **two** of the women involved in the killing of Pentheus in **Image 1**. [2]

The vast majority of the candidates were able to name at least one of the women, with most giving two correct names.

**Question 2**

- 2 What is the object which the figure in **Image 2** is holding? [1]

Most of the answers were correct.

### Question 3

- 3 Analyse how useful **Source A** is in telling us how Euripides used traditional myths in the plots and staging of his plays. [10]

Candidates were generally aware of the content of the scene on the pot and were able to identify Image 2 as showing a Bacchant. They identified key features from the vase that could also be found in Euripides' play, such as Pentheus' sparagmos and the portrayal of the Bacchants. Some candidates also pointed out significant differences between the vase and the play, such as the presence of a satyr on the pot, and were able to highlight the fact that the vase was dated a considerably long time before the play was written.

#### Misconception



The satyr was misidentified as Dionysus, or even the Messenger, by some candidates.

Less successful responses did not seem to be aware of the date the pot was made. They looked at the pot as showing a production of a play, or even of Euripides' actual play, discussing how useful the pot is in showing us how the play was staged, rather than answering the actual question.

#### Assessment for learning



Candidates should be aware of the provenance and date that each material culture source was made.

## Exemplar 1

3	<p>source A is useful in telling us how Greeks used traditional myths in the plots and staging of his plays as source A is an image of the Pentheus vase dated 480 BC which clearly shows the myth of Pentheus. Source A is showing the scene where the female Bacchantes kill Pentheus in the mountains. We can see from the pot that the figures either side of Pentheus are Maenads (followers of Dionysus) as they are depicted wearing costumes that show their cult. For such as their hair is done up, they're wearing leopard skins and long dresses. Pentheus is depicted in the middle being torn apart by the women, this is a very significant moment in the play 'Bacchae' <del>that</del> therefore showing that source A is useful as it is clear that the traditional myth is made clear in the depiction.</p>
---	--

In the exemplar above, the candidate is aware of the time difference between when the pot was made and when the *Bacchae* was produced.



## Question 4

## Source B

Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* 1263–1285

<b>MESSENGER</b>	Oh how <u>she</u> wept, mourning the marriage-bed where she let loose that double brood—monsters— husband by her <u>husband</u> , children by her child.	
	And then— but how she died is more than I can say. Suddenly	5
	Oedipus burst in, screaming, he stunned us so we couldn't watch her agony to the end, our eyes were fixed on him. Circling like a maddened beast, stalking, here, there, crying out to us—	10
	Give him a sword! His wife, no wife, his mother, where can he find the mother earth that cropped two crops at once. Himself and all his children? He was raging—one of the dark powers pointing the way, none of us mortals crowding around him, no,	15
	with a great shattering cry—someone, something leading him on— he hurled at the twin doors and bending the bolts back out of their sockets, crashed through the chamber. And there we saw the woman hanging by the neck, cradled high in a woven noose, spinning,	20
	swinging back and forth. And when he saw her, giving a low, wrenching sob that broke our hearts, slipping the halter from her throat, he eased her down, in a slow embrace he laid her down, poor thing ... then, what came next, what horror we beheld!	25

4 Who is 'she' (line 1)? [1]

Virtually every answer was correct.

## Question 5

5 Give the name of her first 'husband' (line 3). [1]

Most answers were correct, although there was some confusion with other components, e.g. Laertes, Lausus.

## Question 6

- 6 Assess how effectively Sophocles makes the passage in **Source B** a successful piece of drama. [10]

This was generally answered well. The most successful responses identified a range of techniques which Sophocles used and explained their effect, using quotations or close reference to the passage as evidence for the point being made. Elements discussed included the references to the incestuous relationship between Jocasta and Oedipus, the simile comparing Oedipus to a 'maddened beast' and the emotions the speech raised in the audience. Some candidates didn't provide a sufficient range of detail, over-explaining a few points instead. Others found it hard to explain exactly how a certain phrase made the piece dramatic. In many cases, there was a lack of focus on the ending of the passage.

## Question 7\*

- 7\* 'Sophocles made better use of messenger speeches than Euripides.'

Explain how far you agree with this statement.

You may use **Source B** as a starting point in your answer.

[20]

[Section A Total: 45]

Most candidates were able to discuss the role of messenger speeches in the plays. Many candidates made good use of Source B to support their arguments about Sophocles' messenger speeches. Some candidates also mentioned Source A. However, a number of candidates confined their discussion of the messenger speeches in *Oedipus the King* to Source B and did not mention Oedipus blinding himself. Many responses also discussed the role of the Corinthian messenger in the play.

There were a few candidates who showed really impressive, detailed knowledge of the content of both Euripides' messenger speeches, supplying quotations and analysing them in a sophisticated manner. A number of responses only focused on Euripides' second messenger speech about the sparagmos of Pentheus, and did not mention the first messenger speech in the play that was reported to Pentheus, focusing on the actions of the Bacchantes.

### Misconception



Some candidates were unsure about the nature of a messenger speech and treated any monologue which gave information as a messenger speech, rather than a speech delivered by a messenger. These included the prologue of *Bacchae* and the words of the Theban shepherd in *Oedipus the King*.

## Exemplar 2

		<p>A common critique of Euripides is that much of his exposition comes in the form of long blocks of <del>sp</del> monologue, and this is conveyed through the first messenger speech of <i>Bacchae</i>. The messenger states what the Theban Women were doing in the mountains under the influence of Dionysus, and this is full of rich descriptions such as the milk flowing from the ground, or the paradoxically disturbing yet nurturing image of mothers suckling animals. The action is then heightened as the women run through nearby villages and disrupt society. While this speech is undoubtedly an effective piece of drama, it merely exists to relay information to the character of Pentheus, rather than to add to the tragic nature of the play. Contrast this with Sophocles, who does not need messenger speeches for exposition as he relays information through dialogue, such as the conversation between Oedipus and the priest in the prologues.</p>
--	--	---

The exemplar above analyses the effect of the first messenger speech in *Bacchae* and includes a comparison with Sophocles.

### Misconception



Some candidates believed that the messenger speech from *Oedipus the King* describes the death of Oedipus.

Many candidates were able to draw comparisons between the use the two playwrights made of messenger speeches, and conclude with a sound judgement on whose messenger speeches they felt were more effective.

## Section B overview

Candidates generally showed good knowledge and understanding of all three plays. They were able to use quotations and close references as evidence for the points they were making. Use of modern scholarship was intermittent, with most answers containing some mention of scholars. There were, however, quite a few candidates who referred to only one or no scholars, which limited the AO2 mark. More successful responses integrated the scholars into the discussion and engaged with their views, but sometimes use of scholars was just a 'name dropping' exercise. There were also occasions when candidates used scholars to an excessive degree, which at times hindered or even drove the narrative. In both questions, there was a tendency for conclusions to be quite short and underdeveloped. Some candidates used a plan for their essay, which tended to help with the organisation of the response.

There were more responses to Question 9 than to Question 8.

### OCR support



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\*

8\* 'The use of disguise and role reversal is the main reason for the success of Aristophanes' *Frogs*.'

Assess how far you agree with this statement.

[30]

Candidates were mostly able to give lots of examples and details from the play to cover both the given topic and a variety of other points. More successful responses covered a wide range of comic techniques, such as scatological and slapstick humour. These responses were also aware that the success of *Frogs* was dependent on more than just how funny the play is, acknowledging that the parabasis was probably the reason for the unprecedented repeat performance of the play. Particular points of strength in many responses included the use of disguise and role reversal to help and support Aristophanes' political and personal message and the use of background historical and contextual knowledge such as the references to Arginusae and Alcibiades. A number of candidates seemed unsure of the details of the second half of the play.

## Exemplar 3

		The role <del>reversal</del> reversal and disguise
		also adds to the humour generated
		in the play. When Dionysus and
		Xanthius get to Hades, <del>there</del> and
		are at Pluto's door they are bombarded
		by people from Hercules' last visit who
		wish to <del>offer</del> welcome and punish him.
		Xanthius and Dionysus are <del>is</del> whipped by
		Aeacus, Pluto's slave, because he cannot decide
		who is the god and who is the slave. This
		idea of role reversal and disguises is
		supported by the scholar, S Cartledge,
		as he expresses, "In comedy... the
		norms of <del>everyday</del> ordinary life are
		often <del>subv.</del> suspended, subverted or even
		turned on their heads." This is highlighted
		by Aeacus' inability to believe Dionysus is
		a god and Xanthius his slave.

The exemplar above shows part of a discussion of disguise and role reversal, before the candidate went on to analyse other reasons for the play's success.

## Question 9\*

- 9\* 'It is easier for a modern audience to enjoy an ancient Greek tragedy than an ancient Greek comedy.'

Assess how far you agree with this statement. In your answer, you should discuss **at least two** of the plays you have studied. **[30]**

Candidates generally exhibited good knowledge of the content and concepts found in the plays they had studied. Many of them were able to compare elements that they thought were more enjoyable from one genre of play to the other and explain why they felt this was the case. Many candidates, for instance, felt that the political references in *Frogs* led to it being less enjoyable for a modern audience due to the lack of contemporary knowledge. By contrast, they felt that some of the themes of tragedy, such as morality and tyranny, were more able to transcend the centuries in terms of being enjoyable. They also compared the different types of comedic techniques found in *Frogs*, such as scatological humour and slapstick, which are universal, to elements of ancient Greek tragedy which would be less accessible for a modern audience, such as ancient Greek mythology and religion.

It was good to see a number of candidates commenting on productions they had seen, such as the University of Warwick production of *Frogs*. There were still, however, those who treated the plays as literature to be read, rather than drama to be viewed.

Although opinions were divided as to which a modern audience might prefer, candidates were generally able to provide a robust argument.

## Copyright information

Question 2: Douris Kylix Interior, © WorldPhotos/Alamy Stock Photo.

Question 4: © Sophocles, translated by Robert Fagles, *The Three Theban Plays: Antigone; Oedipus the King; Oedipus at Colonus*, pp. 236, 237, Penguin Classics, 2000.

Permission to reproduce all copyright material has been applied for. In some cases, efforts to contact copyright-holders have been unsuccessful and OCR will be happy to rectify any omissions of acknowledgements in future papers if notified.



---

# Supporting you

---

## Teach Cambridge

Make sure you visit our secure website [Teach Cambridge](#) to find the full range of resources and support for the subjects you teach. This includes secure materials such as set assignments and exemplars, online and on-demand training.

**Don't have access?** If your school or college teaches any OCR qualifications, please contact your exams officer. You can [forward them this link](#) to help get you started.

## Reviews of marking

If any of your students' results are not as expected, you may wish to consider one of our post-results services. For full information about the options available visit the [OCR website](#).

## Access to Scripts

We've made it easier for Exams Officers to download copies of your candidates' completed papers or 'scripts'. Your centre can use these scripts to decide whether to request a review of marking and to support teaching and learning.

Our free, on-demand service, Access to Scripts is available via our single sign-on service, My Cambridge. Step-by-step instructions are on our [website](#).

## Keep up-to-date

We send a monthly bulletin to tell you about important updates. You can also sign up for your subject specific updates. If you haven't already, [sign up here](#).

## OCR Professional Development

Attend one of our popular professional development courses to hear directly from a senior assessor or drop in to a Q&A session. Most of our courses are delivered live via an online platform, so you can attend from any location.

Please find details for all our courses for your subject on **Teach Cambridge**. You'll also find links to our online courses on NEA marking and support.

## Signed up for ExamBuilder?

[ExamBuilder](#) is a free test-building platform, providing unlimited users exclusively for staff at OCR centres with an [Interchange](#) account.

Choose from a large bank of questions to build personalised tests and custom mark schemes, with the option to add custom cover pages to simulate real examinations. You can also edit and download complete past papers.

[Find out more](#).

## Active Results

Review students' exam performance with our free online results analysis tool. It is available for all GCSEs, AS and A Levels and Cambridge Nationals (examined units only).

[Find out more](#).

**You will need an Interchange account to access our digital products. If you do not have an Interchange account please contact your centre administrator (usually the Exams Officer) to request a username, or nominate an existing Interchange user in your department.**



## Need to get in touch?


If you ever have any questions about OCR qualifications or services (including administration, logistics and teaching) please feel free to get in touch with our customer support centre.

Call us on  
**01223 553998**

Alternatively, you can email us on  
**support@ocr.org.uk**

For more information visit

 **[ocr.org.uk/qualifications/resource-finder](https://ocr.org.uk/qualifications/resource-finder)**

 **[ocr.org.uk](https://ocr.org.uk)**

 **[facebook.com/ocrexams](https://facebook.com/ocrexams)**

 **[twitter.com/ocrexams](https://twitter.com/ocrexams)**

 **[instagram.com/ocrexaminations](https://instagram.com/ocrexaminations)**

 **[linkedin.com/company/ocr](https://linkedin.com/company/ocr)**

 **[youtube.com/ocrexams](https://youtube.com/ocrexams)**

## We really value your feedback

Click to send us an autogenerated email about this resource. Add comments if you want to. Let us know how we can improve this resource or what else you need. Your email address will not be used or shared for any marketing purposes.



**I like this**



**I dislike this**

Please note – web links are correct at date of publication but other websites may change over time. If you have any problems with a link you may want to navigate to that organisation's website for a direct search.



OCR is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored. © OCR 2024 Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations is a Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England. Registered office The Triangle Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge, CB2 8EA. Registered company number 3484466. OCR is an exempt charity.

OCR operates academic and vocational qualifications regulated by Ofqual, Qualifications Wales and CCEA as listed in their qualifications registers including A Levels, GCSEs, Cambridge Technicals and Cambridge Nationals.

OCR provides resources to help you deliver our qualifications. These resources do not represent any particular teaching method we expect you to use. We update our resources regularly and aim to make sure content is accurate but please check the OCR website so that you have the most up to date version. OCR cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions in these resources.

Though we make every effort to check our resources, there may be contradictions between published support and the specification, so it is important that you always use information in the latest specification. We indicate any specification changes within the document itself, change the version number and provide a summary of the changes. If you do notice a discrepancy between the specification and a resource, please [contact us](#).

You can copy and distribute this resource in your centre, in line with any specific restrictions detailed in the resource. Resources intended for teacher use should not be shared with students. Resources should not be published on social media platforms or other websites.

OCR acknowledges the use of the following content: N/A

Whether you already offer OCR qualifications, are new to OCR or are thinking about switching, you can request more information using our [Expression of Interest form](#).

Please [get in touch](#) if you want to discuss the accessibility of resources we offer to support you in delivering our qualifications.