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Examiners' report

CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

H008
For first teaching in 2017

H008/21 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 21 series overview

The enduring enjoyment of candidates in reading and studying the plays 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 opinions about the questions and use evidence to back up these opinions. The responses showed the personal reaction of the candidates to the plays and the issues they raised.

Finally, legibility and quality of written communication is still 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 made 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:
- read the questions carefully - used both literary and material culture evidence - provided quotations/close reference to the plays - were aware of the historical and social context of the plays - addressed the question directly - came to a conclusion - were aware of the plays as pieces of drama, rather than literature - made four separate, distinct points in the 8-mark questions - used paragraphs to clarify points made and the line of argument in higher tariff questions	- made little reference to the actual plays in the higher tariff questions - used information which was not relevant to the question - wrote lengthy introductions to some responses, including lower tariff questions - started a response to higher tariff questions with a conclusion and then disagreed with their introduction, leading to a confusing argument - used technical terms such as *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis* without understanding what they mean - wrote a continuous response in both the 8-mark and the higher tariff questions, which made it difficult to follow the argument or the separate points being made.

| 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 start the response to each 8-, 16- and 25-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

Candidates generally had good knowledge of the plot and details of Euripides' *Bacchae*. 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.

Source A
Kylix by Douris

Image 1 Exterior of the kylix
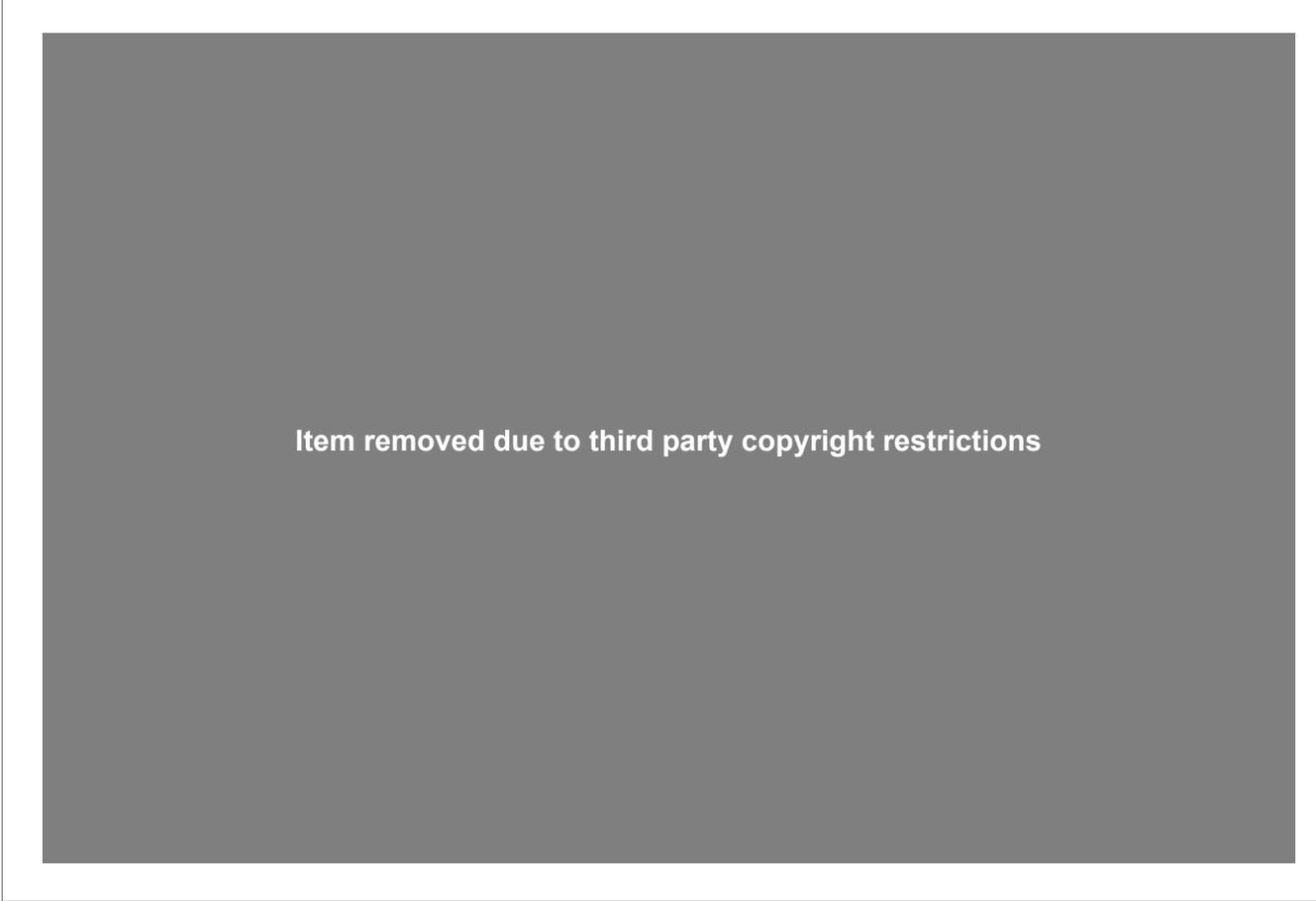
Item removed due to third party copyright restrictions

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]**

Almost every candidate was able to name at least one of the women. Most gave two correct names.

Question 2

2   Why do you think that Douris has included a satyr in the scene in **Image 1**? Make **two** points. **[2]**

Candidates were generally aware of the association of satyrs with Dionysus, and were able to make relevant points about how this fitted in with the portrayal of a satyr on the pot.

Question 3

3   What is the animal which the figure in **Image 2** is holding?   **[1]**

A majority of candidates were able to identify the animal correctly.

Question 4

4   Analyse how useful **Source A** is in telling us how Euripides used traditional myths in the plots and staging of his plays.

Make **four** points and support each point with reference to **Source A**.   **[8]**

Candidates were generally aware of the content of the scene on the pot and were able to identify Image 2 as showing a Maenad. More successful responses were aware of the fact that the pot was made many years before the production of Euripides' *Bacchae,* and thus showed a scene from the myth. Less successful responses did not seem to be aware of this. They looked at the pot as showing a production of a play, or even of Euripides' version of the story, discussing how useful the pot is in showing us how the play may have been produced, rather than answering the actual question.
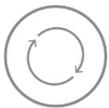
Assessment for learning
Candidates should be aware of the place and date that each material culture source was made.

Exemplar 1

4		Source A is dated far before Euripides' play was puts on stage showing the existence and popularity of the myth before Euripides and possibly where Euripides gained influence from to write the play. Source A shows the origin of the scene of sparagmos In Source A, the torso of Pentheus has been ripped off already and the Bacchants are gripping onto his arms. Euripides possibly gained influence from this to write the scene of
		sparagmos and developed it in his own writing to make it more tragic

The exemplar above shows how the candidate, although not specifying the date of the pot, is aware that it was made before Euripides wrote his play and analyses how this may have influenced Euripides.

Question 5

Source B
Euripides' *Bacchae* 748–774

MESSENGER	Like birds rising up in flight, the women moved over the plains stretching below, which push up the Thebans' rich crops of corn by the water of Asopus; and then they fell like enemies on the villages of Hysiae and Erythrae, which lie on the lower slopes of Cithaeron. There they turned everything upside-down. They snatched children from their homes, and whatever they put on their shoulders stayed there without falling to the black earth, not even bronze or iron; and they carried fire in their hair without it burning them.	5
	The inhabitants, enraged at being plundered by the bacchants, rushed to arms. Then there was a sight extraordinary to behold, <u>my lord</u>; for the men's spearpoints drew no blood, but the women, hurling thyrsi from their hands, wounded the men and made them turn and run – women overcoming men! Some god must have been there.	10
	Then they went back to the place they had set out from, to the same springs the god had set up for them, and washed off the blood, and the snakes' tongues cleaned the drops from their cheeks.	15
	So, master, welcome this <u>god</u> to the city, whoever he is, for among the other ways he is great, they say – I have heard – it was he who gave man the vine that ends pain; if wine ceased to exist, then there is no more <u>Aphrodite</u>, no more pleasure of any sort for mankind.	20

5 Who is 'my lord' referred to in line 10? **[1]**

The vast majority of the candidates correctly identified Pentheus.

Question 6

6 Give the name of the 'god' mentioned in line 17. **[1]**

All of the candidates identified Dionysus correctly.

Question 7

7 Who is 'Aphrodite' (line 20)? **[1]**

Most candidates were able to give an appropriate detail about Aphrodite.

Question 8

8   Explain how Euripides has made **Source B** a successful piece of drama.

Make **four** points and support each point with reference to **Source B**.   **[8]**

> This question was generally answered well. Candidates were able to analyse the passage to explain how Euripides has made it a successful piece of drama. Most points were backed up either by reference to the passage or, in most cases, direct quotations. They identified techniques like the simile and the language used, as well as ideas such as the role reversal and transgressive nature of the women. Some responses discussed the advice given by the Messenger to Pentheus.

Question 9*

9*   Assess how effectively Euripides makes use of messenger speeches in *Bacchae*.

You may use **Source B** as a starting point in your answer.   **[16]**

> This was the question which some candidates struggled to answer.

Misconception

?   Some candidates seemed unaware of exactly what constitutes a Messenger Speech. They assumed that any monologue giving information, including Dionysus' prologue and the report of the soldier arresting Dionysus, is a Messenger Speech.

> A number of candidates were unable to produce details of Messenger Speeches beyond the passage, and with general references to the rest of the speech. Quite a few did not mention the description of Pentheus' death at all. There were, however, some very good responses which dealt in precise detail with both Messenger Speeches, and discussed not only their purpose, but also the effect they had on the audience and the opinions expressed by the messengers. This can be seen in the exemplar below, which deals with the Second Messenger Speech. There is good detail from the play and analysis of the effect the speech has.

Exemplar 2

> In the second messenger speech, Euripides includes graphic description of Pentheus' death. The mention of a stray foot with a sandal still on it uses pathos to make the audience connect with Pentheus, and remind them that although he was an arrogant fool, he was human like them, and did not deserve the brutal fate he got received.

Section B overview

Candidates generally showed good knowledge and understanding of the two plays. In both questions, there was a tendency for conclusions to be quite short and underdeveloped, meaning that they did not fully sum up the arguments. Some candidates used a plan for their essay, which tended to help with the organisation of the answer. More successful responses used precise references to the plays, while less successful responses tended to talk in generalisations, without using specific details from the plays as evidence for the assertions being made. There were quite a few references to scholars, which were given credit even though there was no requirement for scholars to be used. Question 10 was by far the more popular of the two questions.

Question 10*

10* 'Disguise and Role Reversal are the main sources of humour in Aristophanes' *Frogs*.'

Assess how far you agree with this statement. **[25]**

> Candidates generally showed good knowledge of the play. They were able to pick out examples of disguise (Dionysus dressed up as Heracles) and role reversal (the dynamic between Dionysus and Xanthias). More successful responses compared these with other forms of humour, as can be seen in the exemplar below.

Exemplar 3

Disguise further provides humour in the first half as Dionysus disguises himself as Heracles in order to make his Katabasis with Heracles' 'contacts'. This moment is particularly humorous due to the metatheatrical nature of Dionysus' costume. Heracles laughs at the yellow poking out underneath Dionysus' poor disguise and the audience is reminded that they are watching an actor dressing up as a character who is trying to dress up as another character. The visible two layers of clothing provide humour for the audience and point to the fact that it is actually a play on stage.

However, disguise and role reversal are not the only sources of humour and Aristophanes utilises the scatalogical humour and innuendo that old comedy typically contained to make the audience laugh. The first scene of Frogs contains jokes like 'I'm feeling

the 'squeeze' referring to needing to poo and there is continuous reference to toilet jokes like 'my bum is wet' throughout the first half of the play. The chorus of Initiates also partake in this immature humour, referring to a girl who the can see 'a little booby peeking out'. These sexual jokes are typical of comedy and Aristophanes uses them through the play to make the audience laugh. Furthermore, in a humorous manner, Heracles advises Dionysus to kill himself from a tall tower or by hemlock in order to reach the underworld. The joke however is that Dionysus is immortal and so would not die, rather has to enter the underworld via the river where has a laughable singing competition with the chorus of swan frogs. Aristophanes uses the choruses and comments about the human body to create humour also.

The candidate has looked at the effect of the Heracles disguise in making the play funny and gone on to other aspects of humour. In both cases there references to the play to provide evidence to back up the assertions made.

'Disguise' didn't allow for much discussion of the second half of the play and, since this is a weaker area for many candidates, they generally didn't mention the second half at all.

Misconception

? Many candidates had a misconception of what exactly the different forms of humour employed by Aristophanes are, e.g. sexual innuendo was often described as being scatological, or the costume swapping as slapstick.

Candidates often discussed types of humour found in the play without giving examples, which limited the AO1 content.

Question 11*

11* Assess how far you agree that it is impossible for a modern audience to fully enjoy Sophocles'
Oedipus the King. **[25]**

Candidates were aware of the main events in the play and were able to use them in their responses. The use of precise details varied, with often a plot summary being used rather than specific references to the plays. Most learners considered that *Oedipus the King* was easier for modern audiences to enjoy because it is timeless and deals with human problems which do not change. These included fate and tyrannical behaviour of rulers. They also noted the similarity of the play's plot to a modern detective story. Elements which were said be less accessible for a modern audience included a lack of knowledge of ancient Greek mythology and the importance of religion and oracles. Some answers got side tracked into discussion of the experience of a contemporary audience compared to a modern one.

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