

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

CLASSICAL GREEK

J292

For first teaching in 2016

J292/02 Summer 2024 series

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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. 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 2 series overview

In this second year of the set text cycle, the Herodotus set text was again offered by the great majority of centres. Candidates performed very well overall, writing in depth and detail about the four extracts studied, and often showing a sophisticated understanding of the text's literary and historical context. Such confident, knowledgeable responses attest to expert and inspirational teaching, despite the timetabling limitations that beset the delivery of Classical Greek in many centres.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrated detailed knowledge and understanding of the whole prescribed text supported their answers with accurate Greek quotation, along with translations that closely matched the Greek quoted analysed literary style effectively, showing an understanding of context offered detailed examples from the whole text in their response to the final 10 mark question, drawing in evidence from sections of the prescription not printed on the question paper, and even from other parts of Herodotus' Histories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> did not know the whole text in detail offered imprecise or impressionistic translations, sometimes confusing similar passages did not support comments with appropriate Greek quotation or did not match their translations to the exact Greek quoted did not analyse linguistic or literary features omitted questions showed limited or vague knowledge and understanding of the whole text in responding to the final 10 mark question.

Three general points (also flagged in previous reports)

- Use of technical (literary) terms**
 Many candidates pepper their responses with literary critical terminology but deploy terms rather loosely. While such misuse is not penalised at this level, candidates are cautioned against using technical terms indiscriminately. Terms frequently misapplied include:
 - *chiasmus* when it does not feature
 - *juxtaposition* instead of 'antithesis' or simply 'contrast'
 - *polyptoton* instead of simply 'repetition'
- Quality of written communication**
 Although English SPAG errors are not usually penalised, it is worth noting recurrent errors:
 - spelling of *shepherd*, *Herodotus*, *repetition*, *led*: two of these words appear correctly on the question paper
 - grammar and syntax: comma splices; use of 'however', 'therefore' and 'due to'; 'contrasts' (used transitively) instead of 'contrasts with'; 'must of' instead of 'must have'.
 Candidates are encouraged to check through their paper carefully if time allows.
- Legibility of scripts**
 Examiners make every effort to decipher candidates' handwriting and will read and mark as 'seen' everything written on a script. Typed responses are often easier to credit than particularly impenetrable hand-written scripts, and OCR has issued guidance ([here](#)) outlining the various options for including Greek quotations in typed scripts. Teachers and exams officers are advised that Option 2 (writing quotations by hand in the answer booklet) should be avoided if possible. Quotations written in a Greek font (even just symbol in word) are much preferred by on-screen markers; indeed, such responses are often easier to credit reliably.

OCR support



To complement this report, OCR is running [a Webinar 'Exploring the Exam: GCSE Classical Greek J292'](#) on Wed 4 December 2024, which will be repeated on Thursday 6 March 2025. This will feature exemplars and commentaries on selected questions in this paper.

Question 1 (a) and (b)

- 1 Read the passage and answer the questions.

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Tales from Herodotus II (*Psammetichus*) 1–5

- (a) οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι, πρὶν ... γενέσθαι πάντων ἀνθρώπων (lines 1–2): according to Herodotus, what did the Egyptians believe before the reign of Psammetichus?

.....
 [1]

- (b) ἀπὸ τούτου χρόνου ... ἄλλων ἑαυτούς (lines 3–4): how did their opinion change as a result of Psammetichus' investigation?

.....

 [2]

These opening two questions proved unproblematic and were correctly answered by almost all candidates.

Question 2 (a) (i) and (ii)

2 Read the passage and answer the questions.

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Tales from Herodotus II (*Psammetichus*) 13–18

(a) ταῦτα δ' ἐποίει τε καὶ ἐνετέλλετο (line 1):

(i) state one of the instructions which Psammetichus gave to the shepherd in the section before this passage.

.....
 [1]

(ii) explain why the shepherd might have felt uneasy about carrying out this instruction.

.....
 [1]

Part 2 (a) (i) was well answered by almost all candidates. Some of the responses offered here provided a good springboard for the personal response question which followed (part 2 (a) (ii)), while other responses made the next question quite difficult or led to generic answers.

Those who did not connect their response in 2 (a) (ii) to their answer in 2 (a) (i) did not earn the second mark. For example, if 2 (a) (i) was answered '*No one was to speak in the babies' presence*', answers seen for 2 (a) (ii) ranged as follows:

Ideal:

'Because it is extremely cruel to leave the children by themselves without ever speaking to them.'

Generic but acceptable:

'Because it was "two newborn children", not morally correct.'

Too generic:

'They were newborn babies.'

Question 2 (b)

- (b) ἐθέλων ἀκοῦσαι ... τῶν ἀσῆμων κνυζημάτων (lines 1–2): what did Psammetichus want to find out?

.....

.....

..... [2]

Those who translated the whole lemma here were easily able to secure 2 marks. Examiners accepted a range of translations for the genitive absolute phrase (ἀπαλλαχθέντων τῶν ἀσῆμων κνυζημάτων) but if this was omitted, the second mark could not be given.

Assessment for learning



Candidates are reminded to approach comprehension questions of this sort with the intention of covering all the Greek specified in the question. The same advice applies to Question 2 (c) (ii) below.

Question 2 (c) (ii)

- (ii) what happened on the occasion described here?

.....

.....

.....

..... [3]

Most candidates secured full marks by offering an accurate translation of the Greek specified (see the comments about Question 2 (b) above). Those who scored just 2 marks typically omitted 'stretching out their hands', the detail which came at the end of the lemma. A few translations did not make it clear that it was the **shepherd** who opened the door and went in (e.g. 'opening the door and going in, the children ran up...'). Imprecise use of English therefore occasionally cost marks here.

Question 3

3 Read the passage and answer the question.

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Tales from Herodotus III (*Crocodiles*) 2–9

How does Herodotus emphasise the special treatment of crocodiles by some Egyptians? You should make **two** points, each supported by close reference to the Greek.

1

.....

.....

.....

.....

2

.....

.....

.....

.....

[4]

Candidates responded very well to this question, with the majority achieving full marks by offering two good content points, supported by Greek quotation and translation. There were some astute observations about how the practice of embalming crocodiles and burying them in sacred coffins showed a reverence akin to the treatment of great Egyptian rulers. Generalisations or inaccurate translations were liable to weaken a point, and answers that relied upon the repetition of the word καὶ, without further supporting detail, could not be credited.

A significant number of candidates mistranslated περιέπουσιν ὡς κάλλιστα ζῶντας as 'they treat them as the noblest of living things', losing a mark as a result. Please see the exemplar and misconception below for elaboration.

Although linguistic points are not expected when the question is not accompanied by an English translation (see the *Assessment for learning* box below), a number of responses included valid stylistic points, commenting, for example, on the verb choices of τρέφουσι and δεδιδαγμένον and offering good analysis of the dedication these suggested.

Exemplar 1

1 He ~~says~~ says. 'ἕνα δὲ ἐκ ἁτέρου τρέφουσιν κροκόδειον, δεδιδάγμένον εἶναι χειρὰν' (each community raises one crocodile taught to be tame) to emphasise the care that the crocodile is given.

2 The use of the superlative in 'περιέπουσιν ὡς κάλλιστα ζῶντας' (they treat them as the noblest of living things) to emphasise how they treat them as holy and give them special treatment.

The first point here is good: it includes a full quotation, accurately translated. The second point, while correctly identifying κάλλιστα as superlative, is weakened by the inaccurate translation. The response therefore earned 3/4 marks.

Misconception



Examiners regularly saw περιέπουσιν ὡς κάλλιστα ζῶντας mistranslated as in the example above. The mistake here is in treating κάλλιστα as adjectival, in agreement with ζῶντας, rather than adverbial in conjunction with ὡς. The correct sense of ὡς + superlative adverb is 'as ... as possible' (see the [GCSE Defined Vocabulary List for paper J292/01](#)) and an accurate translation of this phrase is therefore 'they treat them as well as possible while they live'.

OCR support



The Bloomsbury-produced and OCR-endorsed *Anthology for Classical Greek GCSE* has a running vocabulary and explanatory notes for each of the GCSE prescribed set texts. In addition to this, there are excellent translations of the GCSE set texts published on the Classical Association's [website](#).

Assessment for learning: two points



1. In this year's paper, the AO3 question without accompanying translation occurred *before* the AO3 question with translation. It is worth noting the guidance in the mark scheme for this style of question:

"This question is not inviting style points: two good content points, supported by accurate reference to the Greek, should earn full marks; however, any relevant style points (e.g. repetition of ἱερούς) can be given, so long as the context is clearly understood."

2. While it is acceptable to use leader dots in lieu of a full quotation, this carries the risk of omitting words in translation. Candidates should check carefully that their translation matches the exact words quoted.

Question 4 (a) (i) and (ii)

4 Read the passage and answer the questions.

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Tales from Herodotus IV (*Mycerinus*) 1–7

(a) Μυκερίνω τὰ μὲν ... δικαιότατος ἔκρινεν (lines 1–3):

(i) what was admirable about how Mycerinus governed the Egyptians? Make **two** points.

1

.....

2

.....

[2]

(ii) how does Herodotus suggest that Mycerinus' rule was a welcome change for the Egyptians?

.....

.....

[1]

The first of these questions (part i) was a fairly straightforward comprehension exercise (AO2) and presented few issues. Examiners accepted 'freed' for ἀνῆκε provided that this was coupled with a reference to ἔργα τε καὶ θυσίας. 'Very just' on its own was not accepted without mention also of Mycerinus' role as a judge. This detail could be credited in part ii (an evaluative, AO3 question) if it had not been mentioned in part i, but here an element of comparison was required (i.e. 'most just of all the kings'), the point being that Mycerinus was different from his predecessors. Even so, the great majority of candidates earned all the marks available for both questions.

Question 4 (b)

- (b) ὄντι δὲ ... ἐπιτηδεύοντι (lines 3–4): pick out and translate the **Greek** word which describes Mycerinus' style of rule.

Greek word:

English translation:

[2]

Most candidates were awarded 2 marks for this question. Those who chose a word outside the lemma were not awarded any marks, even if the word chosen was correctly translated. A small number chose ἡπίω but gave an incorrect translation: such responses got 1 mark.

Question 5 (a)

5 Read the passage and answer the questions.

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Translation:

Hearing this, since this sentence had already been passed for him, Mycerinus had many lamps made and, lighting these up whenever night came on, he would drink and have a good time, not letting up during either day or night, roaming into the marshes and the groves and wherever in the land he learned that there were the most suitable places of amusement.

Tales from Herodotus IV (*Mycerinus*) 21–25

- (a) How does Herodotus, by his style of writing, emphasise that Mycerinus was determined to make his life as enjoyable as possible?

You should make **two** points, each supported by close reference to the Greek.

1

.....

.....

.....

.....

2

.....

.....

.....

.....

[4]

This question was answered well by most candidates. Full marks were earned by those who gave two Greek quotations supported by accurate translation, including at least one comment about Herodotus' use of language, as stipulated in the question stem. The best ventured astute comments about language and literary techniques: the imperfect tenses in ἐπινέ τε καὶ ὑπάθει, for example, that mark Mycerinus' ongoing revelry; or the tricolon in ἔλη ... ἄλση ... ἵνα γῆς that emphasises how far he travelled in search of entertainment.

Some candidates did not support their points with sufficient contextual detail to justify 2 marks, offering unmoored comments – for example, about the negatives οὐθ' ... οὐτε (neither...nor) or the repeated instances of (τε) καί, or the superlative ἐπιτηδείότατα. Those that did not quote ἀνιείς ('letting up') weakened otherwise good points about how Mycerinus kept going both day and night.

Misconception



The negatives οὐθ' ... οὐτε (neither...nor) are worthy of comment but these are not an example of polyptoton, since οὐτε is not an inflected word. 'Repetition' is the more appropriate, and simpler, term here.

Assessment for learning



Two reminders for teachers and candidates about the 4 mark AO3 question with accompanying English translation:

1. Candidates are expected to offer at least one point about the author's use of language. There are plenty of good examples to choose from in this passage and candidates are cautioned against relying upon tenuous comments about alliteration (for example, in the phrase ἐπινέ τε καὶ ἠὺπάθει, where the effect of the imperfect tenses is more deserving of comment than the repetition of the letter π).
2. Candidates are expected to match their translation closely to the Greek quoted. They are advised (though not obliged) to use the translation printed on the question paper.

Question 5 (b)

- (b) In the sentence after this passage, what explanation does Herodotus give for Mycerinus' behaviour?

.....

.....

..... [2]

This context question was very well done by the great majority. Candidates invariably hit upon at least two of the correct answers in the mark scheme; most, in fact, offered all three.

Question 6

6 Read the passage and answer the question.

Item removed due to third party copyright restrictions

Tales from Herodotus XV(A) (*Pygmies*) 1–4

Translate this passage into English.

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [5]

This proved to be an accessible translation question, certainly more straightforward than the equivalent on the Plato paper, and most candidates fared very well indeed. A handful of common errors are worth noting:

- loose translations of μέχρι ('as far as') and πέραξ ('beyond') were treated as inconsequential errors
- πλοῦ καὶ ὁδοῦ: the (frequent) mistranslation of this as 'voyage or journey' was treated as an inconsequential error: see exemplar 2 and misconception below
- incorrect translation / omission of ῥεύματος ('the river' / 'the part that flows') was a more serious error
- ἀφ' ἑσπέρας τε καὶ ἡλίου δυσμῶν: this was sometimes rendered as 'from the west **to** the setting sun' or 'from the west and the **rising** sun'; both are illogical and were penalised as a more serious error
- τὸ δ' ἀπὸ τοῦδε ('as for the part after this'): the almost universal omission of τὸ δ' was not penalised
- σαφῶς ('clearly') was occasionally mistaken for σοφῶς ('wisely'): this was a more serious error.

Note that any omitted 'substantial' word (i.e. not a particle) constitutes a more serious error. A single more serious error + a single inconsequential error in an otherwise correct translation cannot earn more than 3 marks. Very few candidates incurred a 'Harmful Addition' (= 1-mark deduction) for continuing their translation beyond the end of the passage.

Exemplar 2

The Nile is known as far as a four day
 voyage or journey beyond where it flows in Egypt.
 It flows from the east to the setting sun. And
 no one is able to speak clearly about the part
 after that. [5]

The translation in this candidate response met the descriptor for 3 marks out of 5: 'Overall meaning clear, but more serious errors or omissions.' It illustrates some of the errors highlighted above:

- 'day' instead of 'months' for μηνῶν
- 'voyage or journey' for πλοῦ καὶ ὁδοῦ
- 'east' for ἐσπέρας
- omission of τὸ δ'.

Misconception



The literal translation of the phrase μέχρι τεττάρων μηνῶν πλοῦ καὶ ὁδοῦ, given in the BCP Farnell & Goff edition, is 'up to four months of sailing and road', for which an acceptable paraphrase is 'for a distance of four months' travel by water and land'. Since the [OCR Anthology](#) (p.133) offers 'voyage' and 'travel' as translations of πλοῦ and ὁδοῦ respectively, examiners accepted 'voyage and journey' for the phrase πλοῦ καὶ ὁδοῦ. 'Voyage or journey', however, it was felt to be too far from the original Greek and, in this relatively straightforward translation question, was penalised as an inconsequential error.

OCR support



As mentioned above (Question 3) in addition to the translation guidance offered by the OCR Anthology, there are excellent translations of the GCSE set texts published on the Classical Association's [website](#).

Question 7*

7* Read the passage and answer the question.

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Tales from Herodotus XV(A) (*Pygmies*) 27–36

How does Herodotus draw attention to the remarkable things seen and experienced by the Nasamonian men on their travels?

In your answer you may wish to consider:

- what the young men saw
- their encounter with the Pygmies

You must refer to the **Greek** and discuss Herodotus' use of language.

[8]

There were some very good responses to this question, with the majority of candidates reaching Level 3 or 4. The strongest candidates made full use of the passage, selecting appropriate aspects of content and style, and supporting their points with well-chosen Greek quotations, accurately translated. Many deployed literary terms appropriately and offered insightful comments about grammar. Most commonly, candidates homed in on the two forms of πολὺς in Line 1; the uses of 'small' in describing the men; their black skin colour; and the placement of 'crocodiles' as the last word of the passage. The superlative μεγίστων describing the marshes was spotted by many and, in the strongest responses, was developed into a good style point about how Herodotus contrasts the expansive terrain with the small pygmies. There were some sophisticated comments about the chiasmus in the phrase ἴσοι ... τὸ μέγεθος, χροῶμα δὲ μέλανες.

Less able candidates betrayed a patchy understanding of the Greek, offering imprecise examples and loose translations: χῶρον πολὺν was sometimes translated as 'a long time'; the plurals δένδρα and ἔλῶν became singular ('tree' and 'marsh' respectively); and examiners regularly saw μετρίων wrongly identified as a comparative, in the phrase μετρίων ἐλάττονες ἀνδρῶν; the phrase ἥλιον ἀνατέλλοντα was confused with 'the setting sun' in the previous question. Candidates who did not offer any linguistic or stylistic commentary were limited to Level 2 (i.e. maximum 4/8 marks) but most included at least one such point, to access a higher level.

Those who limited themselves to commenting on single words had variable success. In some cases, the lack of contextual detail proved detrimental, but even one-word Greek references could be made into a strong point if contextualised enough: for example, *'the word μέλανες ('black') is placed at the end of the sentence in order to emphasise the Pygmies' skin colour, different to the Greeks' skin colour'*.

Many candidates made liberal use of the cumbersome word 'remarkability', evidently preferring this abstract noun to the adjectival phrase in the question stem.

Exemplar 3

After lots of travelling in the desert the men saw "trees" (δένδρα) this is remarkable as the men have reached part of 'Libya' that he had not mentioned before in his description of 'Libya' meaning they had travelled to 'new' lands.

Herodotus says the men were 'small' (μικροί) but he also says they are smaller than "regular men" (μετρίων ἐλάττωες ἀνδρῶν) emphasising how small they are remarkably small they are.

Herodotus says the men were captured and lead through a large swamp (δὲ ἐλὼν μεγίστων) which would be exciting to an audience as they wonder what is going to happen to the Nasamonian men and what will happen to them. They will see in this new part of 'Libya'.

Herodotus says the Nasamonian men saw "crocodiles" (κροκοδείλου) in the river which hints to the audience it could be part of the Nile that has yet to be explored.

This candidate response offers four points that cover the whole passage. It has several weaknesses, however:

- paragraph 1 relies upon the quotation of a single word (δένδρα). The point could be strengthened by a fuller Greek quotation, to bring out the contrast with the previous 'wide sandy region' (χῶρον πολὺν ψαμμώδη), or to emphasise the travellers' surprise in seeing the trees (εἶδον δὴ ποτε).
- paragraph 2 is a good point (some lenience was applied to the erroneously crossed out word μετρίων)
- paragraph 3 is weakened by the singular translation of the plural ἐλὼν μεγίστων

- paragraph 4 again relies upon a single word, the easily recognised κροκόδειλοι. Again, more Greek quotation and, here, a comment about the emphatic position of the word would have strengthened the point.

With no comment about Herodotus' use of language, the response was limited to Level 2 and earned 4 out of 8 marks.

Question 8*

8* How does Herodotus maintain the reader's interest in his various stories about African people and their rulers?

You should support your answer with a range of references to the text you have read, and you may include passages printed on the question paper. **[10]**

There were many excellent responses to this final essay question, with the majority achieving a mark in Level 4 or 5. The open-ended question gave all candidates the opportunity to put their knowledge to use, so that those who had fared less well on the rest of the paper were often able to redeem themselves here. Responses ranged over the full text (only rarely did candidates limit themselves to Level 3 by discussing only two extracts) and drew in plenty of evidence both from the paper and from the wider prescription. Good references to material outside the examination paper included the description of how crocodiles are hunted, the gloomy oracle in the Mycerinus story and the detail that the Pygmies were wizards. Candidates paid careful attention to the wording of the question and made good direct comparisons and analysis of the ruling styles and actions of the two Egyptian kings in the stories of Psammetichus and Mycerinus. There was also some impressive commentary about how Herodotus massages historical fact to keep his readers entertained: for example, his 'folk tale' account of Mycerinus' truncated, six-year rule is at odds with the historical record of the pharaoh Menakaure's much longer reign.

This essay question did not demand a balanced argument, but there were some valiant (not always successful) attempts by candidates to argue the opposite point of view, namely that some of Herodotus' stories are not interesting because they recount cruelty (Psammetichus' experiment) or they are too far-fetched (Mycerinus not sleeping for six years). The strongest candidates, on the other hand, were able to show how the pathos and humour in these stories spark the reader's interest: pathos is found in the Mycerinus story (the death of his daughter) and humour is seen in Mycerinus' outlandish plan to cheat the oracle as well as in the details of Psammetichus' experiment, resolved by a word that sounds like goats bleating.

Some candidates, perhaps on the advice of their teachers, took a thematic approach, tackling in separate paragraphs the various ways Herodotus makes his narrative interesting; cultural differences, characterisation, mystery, and intrigue etc. and drawing in evidence from across the prescription in each paragraph. Others tackled the four tales separately. Either approach was successful, provided that sufficient context and detail were included.

Less successful responses offered only broad outlines of the stories and then stated that the stories were interesting, without offering supporting detail or analysis. For example, some wrote about how interesting the crocodile hunting was but did not elaborate further.

In spite of the time constraints, many wrote at length, making use of the additional answer space and often continuing into a second answer booklet. Notwithstanding some infelicities of expression (as highlighted at the start of this report), credit was given to well-structured answers featuring an introduction and conclusion, clear topic sentences and a sustained line of reasoning.

Assessment for learning



Candidates are reminded that there is no need to quote Greek in the 10 mark essay question, even if those quotations are taken from the extracts printed on the question paper. In fact, Greek quotation is only likely to take up precious time better devoted to checking through a candidate's written English.

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