

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

CLASSICAL GREEK

J292

For first teaching in 2016

J292/03 Summer 2024 series

Contents

Introduction	3
Paper 3 series overview	4
Question 1 (a)	5
Question 1 (b) (i)	6
Question 1 (b) (ii)	6
Question 2	7
Question 3	9
Question 4 (b)	11
Question 4 (c)	11
Question 4 (d)	11
Question 5	12
Question 6*	13
Question 7 (a)	15
Question 7 (c) (i)	15
Question 7 (d)	16
Question 8*	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.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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Paper 3 series overview

In this second year of the set text cycle, the Plato option was again offered by a small number of centres, and this select cohort once again performed very well. The candidates engaged confidently with this challenging text. Responses to the essay question in particular showed detailed knowledge and a mature appreciation of the text and its cultural context. Candidates had evidently been well prepared by inspirational teachers, in spite of the timetabling limitations that beset the delivery of Classical Greek in many schools.

The great majority of candidates typically:	The small proportion who did less well:
<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 used their knowledge of 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 Plato's <i>Phaedo</i>. 	<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 knowledge and understanding of the whole text in responding to the final 10 mark question.

Three general points (also flagged in previous reports)

1. 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'

2. Quality of written communication

Although English SPAG errors are not usually penalised, it is worth noting recurrent errors:

- Spelling of friends, guard, achieve, repetition: three 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'.

Candidates are encouraged to check through their paper carefully if time allows.

3. 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](#) 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)

- 1 Read the passage and answer the questions.

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The Martyrdom of Socrates: Plato *Phaedo* 59e

- (a) ἦκειν ὥς πρωαίτατα (line 1): why did Socrates' friends gather particularly early on this occasion? Your answer should refer to details in the sentence before this passage.

.....

.....

..... [2]

This opening context question was well handled by most candidates. Some lost a mark for not stating when the friends found out about the ship. Examiners were flexible about variable spellings of 'Delos'.

Question 1 (b) (i)

(b) 'λύουσι γάρ ... τελευτᾷ' (lines 3–4):

(i) οἱ ἔνδεκα (line 3): who were 'The Eleven'?

.....

..... [1]

Considerable leeway was applied to the responses given for this question, since many candidates were unsure who the Eleven were, or did not distinguish between Athens and Greece. ('Rulers of Greece' or 'archons' featured among incorrect suggestions.) Any responses connecting this group of officials with Socrates' imprisonment or execution were accepted.

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. On page 201 the phrase οἱ ἔνδεκα is glossed as 'The Eleven', with a note explaining that these were the 'group of officials who carried out the decisions of the court'.

Question 1 (b) (ii)

(ii) what does the doorkeeper say to explain why Socrates' friends must wait to be let in?

.....

.....

..... [2]

An accurate translation of the doorkeeper's words – or a rendition of those words in indirect speech – earned candidates 2 marks. Some, however, used the wrong tense for the verbs λύουσι and παραγγέλουσιν. One such mistake was allowed but two incurred a 1 mark penalty. Examiners took a similar approach to Question 4 (d) (see below).

Question 2

2 Read the passage and answer the question.

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The Martyrdom of Socrates: Plato *Phaedo* 115b

Translate this passage into English.

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [5]

This was a challenging question (harder than the equivalent on the Herodotus paper) and examiners therefore exercised considerable flexibility, accepting a range of alternative translations. Even so, many candidates did not earn full marks. The final nine words were particularly tricky to unravel, but there were other pitfalls too:

- the opening genitive absolute ταῦτα δὲ εἰπόντος αὐτοῦ: ταῦτα or αὐτοῦ were sometimes omitted, or Crito was taken as the subject of the participle; the whole phrase, if mishandled, was marked as a single major error
- omission of εἶεν
 - the interrogative τί, if omitted or taken as indefinite, was judged to be an inconsequential error; however, if this then undermined the translation of ἐπιστέλλεις, a more serious error was incurred
 - the word τούτοις was sometimes rendered 'them' or 'the others' (an inconsequential error); omission of the whole phrase τούτοις ἦ was judged to be a more serious error
 - the plural τῶν παίδων: an inconsequential error if translated as singular (candidates who did this were presumably thinking of the single child who features earlier in the text).

Some leeway was applied to the final nine words, so that μάλιστα, if translated as 'great' or 'much' (i.e. neglecting the superlative force) was not penalised; examiners also took account of the translation guidance in Doherty (BCP edition) and the OCR Anthology, so that 'we might serve you best' or 'we might bring you the most pleasure' were both accepted as translations of ἐν χάριτι μάλιστα ποιοῖμεν.

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.

Exemplar 1

Seeing these things, Krito said to him -
 "Socrates, is there anything that ~~will~~ me and
 your companions could do, about your children or
 anything else, ~~that would~~ for you that would
 please you greatly?" [5]

The translation in this candidate response was judged to be 'part[ly] correct but with overall sense lacking or unclear' and therefore earned 2 of 5 marks. It illustrates a number of the errors highlighted above:

- incorrect translation of the opening genitive absolute phrase
- omission of εἶεν
- indefinite translation of τί
- 'me and your companions' for τούτοις ἢ ἐμοὶ
- omission of ἐπιστέλλεις.

Misconception



Although the finer details of Greek accentuation can be glossed over by candidates (and their teachers) at this level, there are a few words which demand attention to their accent. In this passage, τί (accented) is interrogative, and therefore means 'what'; unaccented του (= τινός), on the other hand, is indefinite, meaning 'anything'.

OCR support



In addition to the translation guidance offered by the OCR-endorsed Anthology for Classical Greek GCSE, there are excellent translations of the GCSE set texts published on the Classical Association's [website](#).

Question 3

3 Read the passage and answer the question.

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Translation:

'What I always say, Crito,' he said, 'nothing newer; that by taking care of yourselves you will do favour to both me and my interests and yourselves whatever you do, even if you do not agree now; but if you do not care for yourselves and are not willing to live as it were in my footsteps according to the things we have talked about now and in the past, even if you make many promises at the present time and eagerly, you will achieve nothing more.'

The Martyrdom of Socrates: Plato *Phaedo* 115b–c

When Socrates' friends ask if he has any instructions for them after his death, how does his language persuade them to continue living the philosophical life that they have so often discussed?

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

1

.....

.....

.....

.....

2

.....

.....

.....

.....

[4]

This question was answered well by most candidates, who showed a secure understanding of what Socrates was arguing here. Full marks were earned by those who gave two Greek quotations supported by accurate translation, including at least one comment about language, as stipulated in the question stem.

Many otherwise strong responses, however, overlooked the stylistic aspect, even though there was plenty to choose from: the use of the word ἀεὶ in the very first phrase; the repeated negatives; the polyptoton of ὑμῶν αὐτῶν ... ὑμῖν αὐτοῖς; the emphatic final three words. Less successful responses often focused on polysyndeton without quoting enough Greek to support the point, simply citing repeated καὶ. The contrast between τὰ νῦν and τὰ ἐν τῷ ἔμπροσθεν rarely elicited comment.

Exemplar 2

1 he says that by "ὑμῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιμελούμενοι" (Taking care of yourselves), "ἐν χαρίτι ποιήσετε" (you will bring pleasure) "ὑμῖν αὐτοῖς" (To yourselves). This shows the benefits of following his instructions which makes them more enticing for his friends.

2 He says that failure to follow his instructions means "οὐδὲν πλεον ποιήσετε" (you will achieve nothing more). This caution warns his friends about the consequences of not following him to persuade them that following him is the right choice.

[4]

This candidate response offers two detailed points, supported by accurate quotation and translation, but neither point has been developed with a stylistic comment: two appropriate possibilities are suggested in the commentary above. The response therefore earned 3 of 4 marks.

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
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 4 (b)

- (b) χρόνον ... ἐκαθέζετο λελουμένος (lines 1–2): pick out and translate the **Greek** word which indicates what Socrates has been doing while away from his friends.

Greek word:

English translation:

[2]

This question was well answered by the great majority of candidates. Examiners did not insist upon a perfect-tense translation of the participle λελουμένος, since 'washing' is syntactically correct as a response to the question ('what Socrates has been doing').

Question 4 (c)

- (c) καὶ οὐ πολλὰ ... διελέχθη (line 2): what does this suggest about how Socrates and his companions are feeling?

.....

..... [1]

There were many thoughtful personal responses to this AO3 question. Most candidates earned the mark.

Question 4 (d)

- (d) ὃ Σώκρατες ... καταγινώσκω (lines 3–4): what does the prison guard say to Socrates?

.....

.....

..... [2]

As with Question 1 (b), an accurate translation of the guard's words here earned candidates 2 marks. Examiners accepted a range of translations of both καταγινώσκω and the idiomatic ὅπερ, but were less forgiving about tense errors: καταγνώσομαι is future but καταγινώσκω is present. One inaccuracy was allowed but two incurred a 1 mark penalty.

Question 5

5 Read the passage and answer the question.

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The Martyrdom of Socrates: Plato *Phaedo* 116d

How does Plato show that Socrates has enjoyed a friendly relationship with his prison guard?

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. Generalisations or inaccurate translations were liable to weaken a point.

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, for example about the complimentary 'ὡς ἀστεῖος', mirrored by 'ὡς γενναίως' or the superlative in the phrase 'ἀνδρῶν λῶστος'.

Assessment for learning



It is worth noting the guidance in the mark scheme for this AO3 question, where the Greek passage is not accompanied by a translation:

"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. use of ὡς; choice of words to describe the guard) can be given, so long as the context is clearly understood."

Question 6*

6* Read the passage and answer the question.

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The Martyrdom of Socrates: Plato *Phaedo* 117c–d

How does Plato convey the contrast between Socrates and his friends in this passage?

In your answer you may wish to consider:

- the manner in which Socrates drinks the poison
- the reaction of Phaedo and the others present

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

[8]

There were some very good responses here, with most candidates in this strong cohort reaching Level 3 or 4. The stronger responses made full use of the passage, selecting appropriate aspects of content and style, and supporting their points with well-chosen Greek quotations, accurately translated. *Pace* the general caveat at the beginning of this report, rhetorical terms were deployed appropriately and insightful comments about grammar were seen. For example, the word ἀστακτὶ ('in floods', but literally meaning 'not drops') was correctly identified as litotes; and the passive force of the participle ἐστερημένος was used to support comments about how Phaedo paints himself as the victim in this scene. There was also some nice writing: for example, 'the cinematic exposition of ἀστακτὶ ἐχώρει τὰ δάκρυα – my tears flowed in floods'.

Less successful responses gave imprecise examples from the text ("δακρύ" is repeated throughout" *vel sim.*) or, in a few cases, gave no Greek quotations at all, confining themselves to just translations. A small number quoted the Greek but omitted to translate it. Those who did not offer any linguistic or stylistic commentary were limited to Level 2 (i.e. maximum 4 out of 8 marks) but most included at least one such point, to access a higher level.

Some misunderstanding was noted over the difference between adjective and adverb, and several candidates did not appreciate that οἱ πολλοὶ means 'most', not 'many'. There were also a number who used the phrase οἱοί τε ἦσαν κατέχειν τὸ μὴ δακρύνειν (line 2) to argue that Socrates' companions were unable to hold back their tears, when in fact it means the opposite at this point in the passage. (Please see the misconception and exemplar 3 below.)

Misconception



Two very similar phrases in this passage are a potential source of confusion:

Lines 1–2: ἡμῶν οἱ πολλοὶ τέως μὲν ἐπιεικῶς οἰοί τε ἦσαν κατέχειν τὸ μὴ δακρύειν ('most of us until then had pretty well been able to keep from crying')

Lines 5–6: οὐχ οἷός τ' ἦν κατέχειν τὰ δάκρυα ('he [Crito] was not able to hold back his tears')

Some candidates conflated these two phrases, incorrectly applying (perhaps under the influence of the μὴ) the negative (οὐχ) from line 5 to the phrase in line 2 and using this to draw a contrast between Socrates' calm demeanour and his friends' emotional reaction. Exemplar 3 illustrates this misunderstanding.

Exemplar 3

Socrates is described as drinking the poison very ~~boldly~~ boldly and calmly 'Μαλα εὐχερῶς καὶ εὐκοίως', while merely seeing this, many of Socrates' friends 'ἡμῶν οἱ πολλοὶ' are ^{not able} ~~unable~~ to hold back from crying 'οἷον τε ἦσαν κατέχειν τὸ μὴ δακρύειν', showing that Socrates is far more emotionally strong than his companions.

This Level 2 response opens well, with an appropriate quotation to illustrate how Socrates drank the poison. ('Boldly' was accepted as a translation of εὐχερῶς since LSJ offers 'recklessly' as a possible meaning.) The rest of the paragraph is weakened, however, by the inaccurate translation of ἡμῶν οἱ πολλοὶ and the claim that the friends are 'not able to hold back from crying'.

Question 7 (a)

7 Read the passage and answer the questions.

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(a) ἤδη οὖν ... ψυχόμενα (line 1): which part of Socrates' body is now being affected by the poison?

..... [1]

The majority of candidates correctly answered this question with '[lower] abdomen' or stomach. There were one or two outliers (calves, for example) and a gym-goer (abdominals).

Question 7 (c) (i)

(c) ὦ Κρίτων ... καὶ μὴ ἀμελήσητε' (lines 2–3):

(i) what does Socrates say to Crito?

..... [2]

(ii) explain Socrates' reference to Asclepius.

..... [2]

Almost all candidates earned at least 1 mark for part (i) of this question, although the word 'cock' was avoided by the more conscientious, who preferred 'rooster' or 'chicken'. In part (ii), however, some were unsure about the context; a few thought Asclepius was a friend of Socrates, others that he was a god of death. Most, however, offered the interpretation given by Doherty and in the OCR Anthology, that the offering was to thank Asclepius for healing Socrates from the illness of life. Several alternative explanations were accepted for Socrates' enigmatic final words: Socrates is showing piety/being ironic/doesn't want to die indebted; or Socrates is enlisting the support of Asclepius to cure Plato from the illness that has kept him away from his mentor's deathbed.

Question 7 (d)

(d) From the lines after this passage, give one detail which confirms that Socrates has died.

.....
 [1]

This context question was well handled by almost all candidates. Several possible details could be adduced from the section after this passage.

Question 8*

8* How does Plato's account of Socrates' last day present him as an unusual person?

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 impressive responses to this final essay question, with the great majority achieving a mark in Level 4 or 5. These excellent responses showed a mature understanding and put their knowledge to good use in answering the question. Responses ranged over the whole text, supported by much evidence both from the paper and from the wider prescription. References to literature outside the prescribed text were seen; for example, Socrates' refusal to escape from prison, mentioned in passing at the beginning of the *Phaedo* and discussed in depth in Plato's *Crito*, was offered as an illustration of his unusual character. That said, there is no expectation that candidates will have explored beyond the prescribed text and candidates are certainly not penalised for patchy knowledge of the wider work from which the extracts are drawn. For example, some candidates maintained that Socrates' curt dismissal of Xanthippe marks the very last time he sees her. This is not strictly correct: they do in fact have a final farewell later, after Socrates bathes (see the brief summary on page 206 of the OCR Anthology).

Although this particular essay question does not demand a balanced argument, there were some confident attempts by candidates to argue the opposite point of view, namely that there were aspects of Socrates' last day that were actually 'normal' or to be expected: seeing his family, for example, or his delaying the moment of his death by washing, or the action of the hemlock on his body.

In spite of the time constraints, many wrote at length, making use of the additional answer pages in the booklet. Notwithstanding some infelicities of expression (as highlighted at the start of this report), well-structured answers featuring an introduction and conclusion, clear topic sentences and a sustained line of reasoning were seen.

Assessment for learning



Candidates are reminded that there is no need to quote Greek in this 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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