

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

**OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in
Classical Civilisation**

H408

For first teaching in 2017

H408/24 Summer 2025 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 responses 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 [Teach Cambridge](#).

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Paper 24 series overview

Greek Art is continuing to maintain its popularity in the 'new' specification and, as in previous years, it was clear that the candidates enjoyed studying the pots and the sculpture. Candidates generally showed good knowledge of individual pieces and were able to express their personal response and show a degree of knowledge relevant to the historical, social and political context of the art.

Candidates mostly managed their time well this year and the vast majority completed the paper and attempted all the questions. There was some evidence of rushed and incomplete answers to Question 8 and the essay questions.

There was little evidence of planning on scripts. Planning the 20 mark and 30 mark questions can really help a candidate to focus on what is required in a particular question and enable them to order their ideas and pull together relevant material. There were many scripts with additional thoughts/ideas and an array of symbols to draw the examiner's attention to them. Most candidates missed the instruction about starting their answers on a new page of the answer booklet.

There is still an issue with the legibility and quality of written communication, especially handwriting and paragraphing. Examiners cannot follow or assess work effectively if they cannot read key words or phrases.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should be encouraged to read through what they have written to make sure that it makes sense.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• read the questions carefully • addressed the question directly • stayed focused on the question posed • came to a reasoned conclusion in the high tariff questions • used specific details to address the topic area of the question • made detailed close reference to the sources when answering the 10 mark questions • followed the rubrics of the questions carefully in Questions 8, 9 and 10 • had a good knowledge of the material on the specification and the time frames • supported their answers in the extended writing questions through using specific reference to relevant material • were aware of the social, historical and political context of the pots and sculpture • cited at least two scholars and showed good engagement with their views • planned their responses • wrote in themed paragraphs.	• did not read the questions carefully enough • did not address all aspects of a question or changed the focus of the question in the higher tariff questions • namedropped statues or pots but did not provide details • did not understand the dating of particular centuries • assigned pieces of art to the wrong medium • used information and arguments which were not relevant to the question being answered • used technical terms such as <i>kouros</i> and <i>kore</i> without understanding what they mean • made little or no reference to scholars in the answer to the essay question • spent time writing out the question or writing introductions for the 10 mark questions • omitted questions.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should be reminded to:

- follow the instructions carefully
- number questions clearly, 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
- attempt each of the low tariff questions even if they are unsure of the answer
- time themselves carefully.

Section A overview

In general, candidates dealt adequately with the content of the Achilles and Troilos frieze and Metope XXVI from the Parthenon. There was evidence, however, that not all candidates were familiar with the content of the François Vase friezes, and it felt that some were looking at the pot for the first time.

Some candidates are still spending too much time on the 10 mark questions, to the detriment of the higher tariff questions. Ten mark questions do not need an introduction and lots of material from elsewhere. Some 10 mark questions, however, do need a conclusion.

Question 1

Source A

The François Vase and frieze from François vase



1 Name the painter of the pot shown in **Source A**.

[1]

Not all candidates were able to identify the pot as the work of Kleitias. The main contenders were Sophilos, Exekias, the Berlin Painter and even the François Vase Painter.

Question 2

- 2 Name the potter of the pot shown in **Source A**. [1]

Very few candidates were able to identify Ergotimos as the potter of the François Vase.

Question 3

- 3 What is the name given to the shape of the pot shown in **Source A**? [1]

Most candidates were able to identify the pot as a volute krater.

Question 4

- 4 Give the date of the pot shown in **Source A**. [1]

The question about the date, in the range 570-550 BC, was the most successfully answered in the section about the François Vase.

Question 5

- 5 Using evidence from the frieze depicting Achilles' pursuit of Troilos and Polyxena, explain how the painter creates a vivid scene. [10]

Using the detail of the frieze provided and the frieze depicted on the large image of the pot, many candidates were able to pick out several key ideas or techniques: the use of white slip; the characterisation of Achilles; the relationship between Achilles and Troilos and the sense of chaos and frenzy created by the toppled vase.

More successful answers tended to consider and analyse the frieze as a whole, fully exploring its 'comic strip' nature. This allowed them to make several excellent points such as the contrast between the calm domestic scene on the right, the frenzy of the chase and the emotional aspects of the Priam scene on the right.

It was good to see some candidates making reference to the architectural details of the buildings, taking in the figures of the gods, Priam receiving the news, and the emergence of the soldiers.

Less successful responses fell into two categories; firstly those which spent a long time on the story of Achilles and Troilos and did not focus on what the vase was showing or on the idea of what makes it a vivid scene. Secondly, those which did not know the story at all and focused on the Peleus and Thetis frieze or the Calydonian Boar Hunt frieze.

There was some confusion in naming individual characters, for example the figure with the horses was sometimes identified as Achilles and Polyxena was identified as Troilos.

Exemplar 1

		the Frieze - the texture of these two
		buildings creates variety within a
		scene dominated by people, and by
		so vividly. The thin incisions used to
		show detail, and thin painted lines
		used to show spears held by male
		characters show a vivid attention to
		detail - this is furthered by the black pot
		shown falling beneath a horse's
		jumping body, illustrating the speed
		of the animals in a snapshot moment.
		The dynamic poses of figures - one
		seated, gazing upwards, another with
		both arms raised, another two with
		one arm raised - create stimulating
		visual variety and differentiate between
		characters vividly. The use of profile
		faces facilitates clear interaction between
		figures, such as the man and
		woman on the left side of the frieze.
		The use of sparse alternating colour
		patterns on the two buildings contrasts
		the plainer coloured clothing of the
		figures, drawing our attention from left
		to right and encouraging viewers to
		follow the pursuit of Achilles, the
		dynamic pose of the man running after
		the horse (extended leg mid-air) and

In this extract from a Level 5 response, the candidate comments on how Kleitias uses the buildings to frame the narrative, to show the progression of the story and to add detail to make it a vivid scene. The candidate has referred to precise details from the frieze and used them to provide precise analysis.

Question 6

Source B

A piece of architectural sculpture depicting a scene from the Centauromachy



6 What is the technical name given to the type of architectural sculpture shown in **Source B**? [1]

Virtually all candidates were able to give metope as the technical name of this piece of architectural sculpture. A small number of candidates gave the answer 'Doric frieze', which was not credited as it was not the technical name of the piece shown.

Question 7

7 Assess how far you find this piece of sculpture aesthetically pleasing.

Use references to **Source B** to support your answer.

[10]

The question about Parthenon Metope XXVI was generally answered successfully and confidently, with varying amounts of detailed reference to the metope. This was certainly a metope which polarised opinions about the metope as a whole and about individual elements of the metope. Candidates could describe and analyse its content well. The most complete answers commented on both pleasing and less pleasing aspects of the sculpture, taking in a wide range of points to include pose, anatomy, drapery, use of space, proportions and characterisation.

Lots of responses mentioned the drapery but it was viewed in very different ways. Some candidates said that it was poor, while others highlighted its importance and argued that it enhanced the scene. There were lots of positive comments about the folds carved into it, with few picking up on the fact that part of the drapery is not visible and would have been added with paint. In the same way elements of the anatomy of both figures were viewed as highly developed and realistic or conversely as harsh and unrealistic. The position of the Lapith's toes provoked a good deal of discussion with some claiming that it successfully showed strain while others said that it is an impossible pose. Candidates picked out some of the key flaws nicely – the issues around the proportions of the centaur and its lack of neck.

The concept of civilisation versus barbarism was frequently mentioned but some candidates struggled to connect this to specific details on the metope.

Some answers were overly negative and one-sided which meant they lacked the level of detail of more balanced answers. For instance some picked out a range of flaws without stating anything that could be considered aesthetically pleasing, while other responses picked out what was missing – the Lapith's head and arm and the centaur's arm and foreleg – and said this meant it could not be appreciated or considered aesthetically pleasing. A few responses confused the terms Lapith and Centaur. Some candidates confused the Parthenon metopes with the metopes of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia and there were several discussions of Herakles rather than the Lapith.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should be advised that the 10 mark questions are based on the image on the paper, not on the whole of a frieze or pot.

Some candidates are still writing introductions for the 10 mark questions: these are not needed and waste valuable time in an examination.

A small number of candidates chose to write their answers in bullet points which generally did not result in them giving a full analytical response.

Question 8*

- 8* The Centauromachy was a popular theme in architectural sculpture. Assess which type of architectural sculpture you think is the most successful in depicting this theme.

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

[20]

The most successful answers addressed all three types of architectural sculpture equally, with some detail about each, before reaching a conclusion. The most successful answers combined detail from the sculptures (AO1) and included a range of points considering the limitations of the type of sculpture in conveying the narrative of the story, as well as composition and characterisation (AO2).

There was lots of good discussion around the snapshot nature of the metopes and how this may have lacked the chaos and brutality of the more continuous scenes on the Bassae frieze and the whole scene portrayed on the pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia. There was some insightful discussion about the inclusion of the Lapith women in these two examples and how this evoked pathos and sympathy. There were good comments about the placement of Apollo at the apex of the Olympia pediment and how this enhanced the narrative and the message. There were some interesting responses about the pediment suiting the natural body shape of centaurs, and a few answers recognised the affiliation with the building/location of the sculpture and the theme.

Few candidates considered the real limitations of some of the examples: for instance, the inconsistent quality of the Parthenon metopes and errors evident in the Bassae frieze. Some candidates focused on only two of the three types of architectural sculpture. Others, perhaps misreading the question, discussed only one type and argued solely for this. Several candidates confused the Parthenon metopes with the metopes from the Temple of Zeus at Olympia. Some candidates also confused the Bassae frieze with the Siphnian Treasury frieze.

Again, there was lots of discussion of civilisation versus barbarism, but not much connection to how the sculpture was designed to reflect this.

There was some evidence here of candidates running short of time and therefore cutting this answer short, or omitting it completely, in order to get on to the essay question.

Misconception



A common misconception was that the frieze was on the Siphnian Treasury not on the temple of Apollo at Bassae. There was clear confusion between the Centauromachy and Gigantomachy and Amazonomachy.

Exemplar 2

		Source B shows one of the metopes from the Parthenon, ^{dating 447-442} and viewed individually I think this form of architectural sculpture can be viewed as successful in depicting the centauromachy because each metope
		shows a slightly different depiction of a fight between the lapith and centaur, and is sculpted with great levels of detail. In each metope there is a single narrative, however all the metopes together form a story of a larger battle. However, as the centauromachy is confined to smaller individual scenes, the whole narrative is not clear divided and lacks a continuous flow. Therefore metopes were successful in depicting detailed versions of centaurs and lapiths to make up a centauromachy, but less successful depicting the theme as a larger narrative because the story is divided up and confined to the small space of metopes.

In this extract, the candidate discusses the positive effects of the Parthenon metopes, citing the detail of each individual metope and the single narrative in each metope to form the complete story of the battle between the Lapiths and the Centaurs. The candidate then goes on to pick out the less successful aspects of the metopes: their size, the individual nature of the scene in each metope and the division of the story into small sections.

The response could have been improved with some detail from the relevant metopes to exemplify the points being made.

Section B overview

The vase painting question was less popular than the free-standing sculpture question, with most candidates tackling Question 10. Generally speaking, Question 9 was slightly better answered, especially when it came to the AO1 element. The key to a successful response is to show knowledge of a wide range of appropriate pots or statues and to give detail rather than just mentioning them as a list or in passing. Better answers tended to have plans which helped candidates to organise their material, approach and scholars for their responses.

Use of modern scholarship varied, with most answers containing some mention of scholars. There were, however, quite a few candidates who cited only one scholar, or no scholars at all, which limited the AO2 mark. There was less evidence of responses being driven by scholars or giving multiple scholarship references. There was some evidence of quotations being misattributed or crudely paraphrased. After a drop in his popularity last year, Spivey was at the forefront of the scholarship league! Other popular scholars were Barron, Boardman, Cook, Osbourne and Richter.

Assessment for learning



A brief plan can be very useful for a candidate to order the content and their ideas for the essay. Adding scholars to be used is also helpful to both the candidate and the examiner.

Question 9*

9* 'Black-figure artists were more creative storytellers than red-figure artists.'

Assess how far you agree with this statement. Justify your response with specific examples of both black- and red-figure pots. [30]

The candidates who chose to answer this question generally showed detailed knowledge of a range of pots. The best answers had an excellent range of pots, knew who the artists were and referenced them accurately and with copious detail. There were some really excellent discussions of the work of the Pan Painter, the Kleophrades Painter and the Berlin Painter. The work of Exekias was the most popular and candidates knew [some beyond the specification – Achilles and Penthesilea and Ajax] and understood his pots very well indeed. Some responses were limited in range, for example not giving sufficient balance of black and red figure sources.

The most common response was that red figure artists were more creative than black figure artists, with the exception of Exekias. Many candidates took comparative or thematic narratives rather than a pot-by-pot approach, for example Dionysus and Maenads, Perseus and Medusa, and compared the red and black figure versions. Some of these responses, however, showed little acknowledgement or understanding of changes over time. Some candidates took a more technical approach, comparing the effectiveness of black figure techniques like incision versus the use of brush strokes on red figure. Sometimes this worked well although at other times this drew students away from a discussion of the storytelling.

Some candidates focused on describing of the pots, and did this well, but did not fully bring out the idea of creative storytelling in their analysis. Some candidates struggled to convey the idea of 'storytelling' and instead just took creativity by itself.

It is always important to remind candidates of the importance of answering the question on the paper rather than a similar or generic question on the advantages and disadvantages of the two vase techniques.

Question 10*

10* 'Male figures were portrayed in a much more interesting and dynamic way than female figures.'

Assess to what extent you agree with this opinion about the portrayal of male and female figures in free-standing sculpture. **[30]**

This essay was generally well answered with most candidates having a confident grasp of the required material and a significant number being able to reference examples from beyond the specification – for example Hestia Giustiniani and the Nike by Paionios. While examples from beyond the specification are **not** expected, such examples allowed candidates to reference material from the 5th century BC.

Candidates seemed more confident in focussing much of their discussion on kouroi and korai and fewer referenced Apoxyomenos and the Antikytheran Youth.

Candidates often paired statues from different eras which allowed them to compare statues directly in terms of being interesting or dynamic. Various meanings of the word dynamic were provided, and all seemed acceptable when provided alongside specific examples from the statues. Less successful answers compared statues from very different time periods, for example the Berlin Standing Goddess and the Diskobolos. Most answers concluded that male poses were more dynamic but the drapery of female sculptures, particularly archaic statues, made them more interesting. A number of answers confused key examples, such as Doryphoros and Diskobolos, and sculptors such as Myron, Polykleitos, Praxiteles and Lysippos.

The most successful answers gave specific detail from the sources for AO1, rather than mentioning them in passing. For AO2, successful answers considered the terms 'interesting' and 'dynamic' separately and argued for a shifting picture across dates and gender. Answers discussed a range of points – differences in pose, drapery, adornments and materials. The vast majority of candidates were able to bring in at least two scholarly views for this answer and many candidates did a good job of making these views relevant. Engagement was limited at times, with some candidates simply name dropping the scholars.

Misconception



In the discussion of drapery many candidates labelled any kind of fold as a catenary fold. This was seen in relation to the drapery on Aphrodite of the Agora, Aphrodite of Knidos, Hermes and Dionysus and Metope 26.

There was some confusion on the benefits that being made in bronze or being painted brought for the skin tones for male and female statues.

Copyright information

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