

Examiners' report

AS LEVEL

CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

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

H008

For first teaching in 2017

H008/11 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 11 series overview

Candidates' enthusiasm for the subject was as evident as ever and it was clear that much time had been spent in preparing them over the last year. The paper allowed candidates to showcase their knowledge and understanding at all different levels. Those who had spent time preparing for the assessment were able to demonstrate this most effectively and performed the best; there was scope, however, for those with less knowledge to demonstrate what they knew in a successful way. Timing was much better, but there were still a few struggling to complete the paper. Paragraphing seems to have gone out of favour. It is, however, a useful tool for imposing order and clarity on an extended answer.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• knew the text well and were able to deploy precise examples in their responses • managed their time effectively to complete the paper • explained why their chosen examples was relevant to the question and to their argument • used a new paragraph where necessary in extended responses • lead with the AO2 when required. Make the point, give the example and explain its relevance.	• did not know the text well enough and/or did not support their ideas with precise examples • struggled with timing • did not always know how to use the information to answer the question • allowed examples to speak for themselves instead of clearly explaining their relevance • wrote continuous responses without clear signposting or paragraphing to help organise their ideas • provided a counter-argument when it was not necessary for the question they had been asked.

Option 1: The Iliad

This was not as popular as the Odyssey option, but there were still many refreshingly good and enthusiastic responses.

Section A overview

There were very few blanks or incorrect answers to the four 1 mark questions. Candidates clearly knew the text well and had generally been well prepared on how to tackle extended responses.

Question 5

5 Explain how **Passage A** is a vivid piece of writing.

Make **four** points and support each point with reference to **Passage A**.

[8]

There were many good responses. In the less successful responses, candidates did not unpack their chosen examples to enable the AO2 marks.

Exemplar 1

		• Another way Homer makes the passage vivid
		is through the list of gifts that Achilles would
		refuse for example "two hundred warriors",
		"all the wealth that flows to Brachmenus"
		This quantifies Achilles' anger to the audience as
		it emphasises how much Achilles is refusing for his
		honour.

Here is an example of a point which has been well explained.

Question 9

9 Why do you think that this was important to Hector?

[1]

Pleasingly, many understood the need for a proper burial in order to enter the afterlife.

Question 10

10 Explain how far you think Achilles is shown to be admirable in **Passage B**.

Make **four** points and support each point with reference to **Passage B**.

[8]

The best answers identified a wide range of admirable or not admirable qualities and supported them with accurate quotation. Work done by candidates and their teachers in answering technique to this type of question was successfully applied in the majority of answers. Candidates successfully identified four admirable/not admirable traits from the passage. They supported this with relevant quotation from the passage and then explained exactly how the chosen example demonstrated the admirable/not admirable qualities of the hero. This last part was essential to gain all of the marks. A few simply quoted from the passage and said this was admirable or not admirable without discussing why or not going into enough depth of detail.

Question 11*

11* 'Evil death'. Explain whether you think this is a fair description of the way death is presented in the *Iliad*.

You may use **Passage B** as a starting point, and your own knowledge of the *Iliad* in your answer.

[16]

The importance of glory was understood and examples from *aristeas* were offered. There was some very good work on the impact on families citing Andromache, Hecuba and Priam as well as on Achilles' grief. Many candidates saw 'evil death' in terms of unflinching fate and also in terms of some of Homer's gory descriptions. Some, more nuanced, approaches explored Homer's euphemisms for death. Less successful candidates took the phrase more literally and just said death is unfair. There were very many fully engaged responses.

Section B overview

There were many good responses to these questions and the majority of candidates had clearly been well-taught. It is worth, however, spending a little time on practising whether a question needs a counter-argument or not. Some responses were unnecessarily including counter-arguments to Question 13.

Misconception



Not all 25 mark questions need a counter-argument.

Assessment for learning



Spend time when working to plan essays on decoding the phrasing of the question, deciding whether a question needs a counter-argument before discussing what arguments to explore.

Question 12*

12* 'Mortal women are of little importance to mortal men in the *Iliad*.' Explain how far you agree with this statement. **[25]**

The importance of childbearing and nurturing, of weaving, of lamentation were all well explored. Better candidates focused on symbiotic relationships seeing men as defenders of the family and women as the custodians of the family. There were sound responses on women as prizes not only in war, but also away from the battlefield. There was engaged discussion as to whether the war was started over Helen because Menelaus loved her or whether it was started because his pride had been offended and Helen was a mere token of that pride.

Question 13*

13* Discuss the different ways in which the immortals are involved in the *Iliad* and explain how they contribute to the success of the epic. **[25]**

Better candidates saw the relationship between immortals and the plot and between immortals and character constructs. Many answers showed the human qualities of the immortals, wondering what hope there is for mortals when the immortals have so many failings. Some less successful responses favoured this question as it offered a chance to achieve reasonable marks by identifying relevant immortals and saying what they did. Such responses were accurate enough but some lacked depth of perception for reward in the higher levels, particularly for AO2. There was no need for a counter-argument to this question.

Option 2: The Odyssey

The overwhelming majority of candidates chose Option 2, and the majority demonstrated a detailed and pleasing enthusiasm for the subject matter.

Section A overview

There were very few blanks or incorrect answers to the four 1 mark questions. Candidates clearly knew the text well and had generally been well prepared on how to tackle extended responses.

Question 15

- 15 Apart from giving him clothes, give **one** other way Calypso helped Odysseus when he left her island. [1]

The phrase 'when he left her island' was too often ignored. Calypso did give Odysseus tools to build his raft, but the point was not credited because she gave him the tools before he built it, let alone before he left Ogygia. Food, drink, advice and a favourable wind were all accepted.

Question 18

- 18 Explain how **Passage A** is a vivid piece of writing.

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

There were many good responses. In less successful responses, candidates did not unpack their chosen examples to enable the AO2 marks.

Exemplar 2

18	One way in which Passage A is a vivid piece of writing is by emphasising the size of the "mountainous wave[s]". This comparison to a mountain helps us as the reader visualise the storm thus making it a vivid piece.
	It is also vivid when it states that "the rudder was torn from his hands". This is because we know how immensely strong Odysseus was, so for the storm to be able to overpower him shows its strength and power to us.
	It is also We can also see how vivid it is when it mentions avoiding the "Finality of death". This is vivid as it constructs the idea of death and helps us realise how serious the situation he is in is to attract his life.
	Finally it is very vivid when the simile of the "North wind at harvest-time". This simile is strong because Odysseus' raft is compared to a ball of thistles in a field, illustrating how insignificant he is as in relation to the storm. This allows us to visualise his little raft being thrown around as if it were weightless.

Exemplar 2 is an example of a response with an appropriate range of points which have been well explained.

Question 19

19 What had Odysseus just managed to do?

[1]

'Just managed to do' in the question is important. Too many candidates wrote about episodes before the bow contest.

Question 23

23 Explain how far you think Odysseus is shown to be admirable in **Passage B**.

The best answers identified a wide range of admirable or not admirable qualities and supported them with accurate quotation. Work done by candidates and their teachers in answering technique to this type of question was successfully applied in the majority of answers. Candidates successfully identified four admirable/not admirable traits from the passage. They supported this with relevant quotation from the passage and then explained exactly how the chosen example demonstrated the admirable/not admirable qualities of the hero. This last part was essential to gain all of the marks. A few simply quoted from the passage and said this was admirable or not admirable without discussing why or not going into enough depth of detail.

Question 24*

24* 'Revenge matters'. Explain why revenge is important in the *Odyssey* and evaluate how it adds to the success of the story.

You may use **Passage B** as a starting point, and your own knowledge of the *Odyssey* in your answer.

[16]

Most candidates extended their reference beyond Odysseus and the Suitors to include Polyphemus and Poseidon. The best answers went beyond this and included reference to additional examples such as the disloyal servants, the Sun-god and Odysseus' men, and the ship of the Phaeacians that was turned to stone. In analysis, most discussed the consequences of the violation of *xenia* and the importance to the plot of the disruption to Odysseus' *nostos* by Poseidon's revenge. The best answers went further and examined the literary benefits of revenge evaluating how the revenge aids excitement and brings both a climax to the story and a satisfying sense of closure to Odysseus' enactment of justice.

Section B overview

There were many good responses to these questions and the majority of candidates had clearly been well-taught. It is worth, however, spending a little time on practising whether a question needs a counter-argument or not. Some responses were unnecessarily including counter-argument.

Misconception



Not all 25 mark questions need a counter-argument.

Assessment for learning



Spend time when working to plan essays on decoding the phrasing of the question, deciding whether a question needs a counter-argument before discussing what arguments to explore.

Question 25*

25* 'Penelope is of little importance to Odysseus.' Explain how far you agree with this statement.

[25]

There were some well-informed responses; Calypso and Circe featured prominently. More nuanced answers saw how it would be hard to refuse an immortal. There were some very good responses considering what Odysseus says to Calypso concerning his wife. Odysseus' attitude towards *kleos* and his desire to explore were often discussed. Penelope's role as mother and as custodian of the *oikos* featured, as did her loyalty and ingenuity. This response was largely well done.

Question 26*

26* Discuss the different ways in which the immortals are involved in the *Odyssey* and explain how they contribute to the success of the epic.

[25]

More successful candidates saw the relationship between immortals and the plot and between immortals and character constructs. Many answers showed the human qualities of the immortals, wondered what hope there is for mortals when the immortals have so many failings. Some less successful responses favoured this question as it offered a chance to achieve reasonable marks by identifying relevant immortals and saying what they did. Such responses were accurate enough but some lacked depth of perception for reward in the higher levels, especially for AO2. There was no need for a counter-argument to this question.

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